Hafa Adai!

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Sharp increase in job openings

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The CNMI Department of Labor's Division of Employment Services reports that the CNMI saw a sharp increase in job openings in December 2022 compared to a month before that.

Citing a report by the DOL's Division of Employment Services, acting DOL secretary Leila Staffler said that, although December 2022 was a tough year for most employers due to delays in the processing of Temporary Labor Certifications, the CNMI still saw a massive increase in job

See DOL on Page 4

Mafnas

US mainland another source of 'ice' — Mafnas

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Traffickers of crystal methamphetamine or "ice" now find the U.S. mainland as another source market for their drugs, according to CNMI Customs Biosecurity director Jose C. Mafnas in a news briefing last Monday.

Mafnas also disclosed that they have not encountered for some time now any smuggling attempt of meth coming from the Philippines.

See MAFNAS on Page 4

Court to rule on 3rd IPI auction next week

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The U.S. District Court for the NMI is set to rule on the third auction of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's gaming equipment next week and will determine whether to approve the sale of not.

Last Friday, court-appointed receiver Clear Management Ltd., through attorney Michael White, asked the district court to approve the third auction of IPI's gaming equipment.

Clear Management, as a

See AUCTION on Page 4

T'Way to increase Seoul-Saipan flights

The number of flights from South Korea to the Marianas will continue to increase in the next several months compared to January 2023.

This month a total of 56 flights are being operated by Jeju Air, T'way Air, and Asiana Airlines from Seoul to Saipan, providing 10,512 available air seats.

In February T'way will

See T'WAY on Page 4

NEW GUAM GUARDSMEN ➤

Maj. Gen. Esther Aguigui, rightmost, Adjutant General of the Guam Army National Guard, congratulates Vincent Taitano, second from left, and Jose Quitano, second from right, soon after swearing in the two as the newest members of the Guam Army National Guard last Sunday at the Commissioner Joaquin S. Tudela Community Park in San Vicente. At left is Saipan Mayor Ramon "RB" Camacho.

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LEIGH GASES

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ASIA
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Local

'COTA to get $1.48M from FTA'

The Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority will be receiving $1.48 million in fiscal year 2023 from the Federal Transit Administration, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) over the weekend.

Sablan disclosed in his e-kilili newsletter that the FTA announced Friday the availability of this funding for COTA.

FTA said nearly $1.7 billion is available to support state and local efforts to modernize aging transit fleets with low-and no-emission buses, renovate and construct bus facilities, and support workforce development.

Sablan said the formula funds apportioned to the Marianas come mainly through the Rural Area Formula Program and the Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program.

He said the Rural Area Formula Program supports public transportation in areas with populations of less than 50,000.

Sablan said the Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program supports replacement, rehabilitation, and purchase of buses and related equipment and the construction of bus-related facilities. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Learn about a graduate scholarship in Environmental Studies in Tokyo

Do you have an interest in expanding your knowledge of environmental issues that affect Micronesia? If you are a citizen of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, or Republic of Palau and have an undergraduate college degree, then plan on joining an online information briefing on a scholarship program that will pay all expenses to earn a master's degree in Global Environmental Studies from the prestigious Sophia University's Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies in Tokyo, Japan.

The full-ride scholarship is offered by Sophia University, the Association for Promotion of International Cooperation, a private foundation based in Tokyo, and the Micronesia Conservation Trust.

To find out more about this exciting opportunity, plan on joining the information briefing online via Zoom. Micronesian graduate students currently studying at Sophia as well as graduates of the program will share their experiences during the briefing. MCT staff will also be available to answer questions from participants.

The online information briefing will be on Friday, Feb. 17 at the following times: 12pm in the Marshall Islands; 11am in Kosrae, and Pohnpei; 10am in Chuuk and Yap; and, 9am in Palau.

The Zoom session:

- https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88297340672?pwd=MDNieVFpQWVMNW9HVWNoeFhZZGpEUT09
- Meeting ID: 882 9734 0672
- Passcode: 351669

The deadline for applying for the scholarship is fast approaching, as is the deadline to apply to Sophia University. The master's degree in Environmental Studies is offered in English. Sophia University is ranked as one of the top research universities in Japan. ***(PR)***

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FAC remains the same for the month of February

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. announced yesterday that the Fuel Adjustment Charge remains at $0.27989 per kilowatt-hour for the month of February.

Although there has been a slight increase in the Mean of Platts Singapore monthly pricing from January 2023 to February 2023, as notified by Mobil Oil Mariana Islands, Inc., the increase did not equal or exceed a 4.5% differential of the average per gallon cost of fuel.

The FAC is one of two components that make up the CUC electric kWh rate, which is used to purchase fuel. The second component is the CUC base rate, which is used to fund operations, projects, and debt services. This base rate has not been increased since April 17, 2014.

CUC is required, pursuant to an order previously issued by the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission, to adjust (up or down) the FAC pass-through rate when the Mean of Platts Singapore monthly pricing equals or exceeds a 4.5% differential of the average per gallon cost of fuel used in the calculation of the current FAC rate.

CUC first instituted the Levelized Energy Adjustment Clause in 2009 to recover fuel and fuel related costs, a system also used by power providers in Guam and the Virgin Islands. In May 2015, the CPUC authorized CUC to change the name of LEAC to FAC to provide customers a more accurate description of the electric rate. ***(CUC)***

Board of Nursing: There is room for improvement

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

In response to complaints of overseas nurses who claim they have been waiting for the CNMI Board of Nursing to release documents they've been waiting for months, the board acknowledges that there is "room for continuous improvements" within the agency.

According to NMI BON chair Roca Quitugua Sablan, there is room for improvement when it comes to the agency's processing times for documents that some nurses are asking for.

"The NMI BON does acknowledge that there is always room for continuous improvement with processing time without compromising our value to ensure that applications received are legitimate, which is why we have applied with the National Council State Board of Nursing for their Optimal Regulatory Board System in 2020 and was waitlisted to start this year, 2023. The BON has invested approximately $50,000 to upgrade and expedite the application process. Since this platform is paperless, it would enable all board members to view and review applications even outside the office and may also give room for applicants to submit applications electronically. The system upgrade has been in the works and we are happy that it is finally coming along to bring greater efficiency to our office operations," she said in an email to *Saipan Tribune*. ***See letter to the editor on Page 9***

However, Sablan noted that the main purpose of the BON is to protect the CNMI community from fraudulent nurses, and to make sure licensed nurses in the CNMI is abiding by the state's Nurse Practice Act.

"Processing and reviewing applications to sit for [the National Council Licensure Examination], requests for [Certificate of Good Standing], endorsement, etc., are not the main purpose of why the BON exist. We also look after the validity of nursing education and training within the NMI. More importantly, the NMI Board of Nursing has other significant fiduciary duties, such as ensuring that [nurses] and techs who are licensed by the NMI are abiding by our state NPA or Nurse Practice Act. The board has the power to terminate, suspend, or sanction licensees who are non-compliant with our NPA. We ensure our nurses have no past or present disciplinary actions before issuing them a license to care for our CNMI community. The community is more than welcomed to submit complaints to the BON in regards to nursing issues and those complaints are investigated if a licensee is found to be in violation of the NPA," she said.

Sablan also noted that the CNMI BON consists of a small group of members who are tasked to review thousands of different applications and requests and, even if they go beyond what they are required to do, it is still difficult to go through all these documents expeditiously.

"The NMI Board…is a small autonomous board with five office staff and seven board members. Board members are not required by law to have a meeting every week or every month but are required to meet quarterly. In the past, the board members review applications that have completed the requirements quarterly, which took longer for any applicant to get an approval. This took about three to nine months. Since then, as the chairperson of the Board, I encouraged all board members to review applications weekly or when time permits. All six board members have full time nursing jobs and one community member," she said.

"Our office personnel have worked diligently to filter through thousands of documents received by our office on top of responding to queries from applicants not only in the CNMI and the U.S., but internationally. So yes, our phone lines will always be busy," Sablan added.

Power service interruptions on Feb. 3 and 6

There will be scheduled power service interruptions on Feb. 3 and 6, 2023, as the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. continues its ongoing system maintenance.

FRIDAY, Feb. 3, 2023

■ Time: 9am to 11am

■ Area(s) affected: Kagman 3 (Kagman Market, Kagman Clinic & Pharmacy, Gaogao Drive, Gaogao Court, Nonnak Avenue, Gagu Street and Banalu Street).

■ Purpose: To install cutouts and jumpers to isolate work area in preparation for the replacement of burnt primary power poles along Gaogao Drive in Kagman 3.

■ Water we11(s) affected: KG-I I, KG-12, KG-13 and KG-14 wells, water services to the affected areas may be affected based on the tank level.

■ Wastewater facility affected: None

MONDAY, Feb. 6, 2023

■ Time: 1pm to 4pm

■ Area(s) affected: Water Well KG-14.

■ Purpose: To re-install the jumpers to complete the feeder 4 circuit.

■ Water well(s) affected: KG-11, KG-12, KG-13 and KG-14 wells, water services to the affected areas may be affected based on the tank level.

■ Wastewater facility affected: None

For more information, contact the CUC Customer Hotline (236-4333) or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (https://www.facebook.com/CommonvvrcalthUtilitiesCorporation/). ***(PR)***

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Volunteer Max Aguon gets free gas for a year

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

For the third year, Marcelino "Max" Aguon, who is a 61-year-old well-known community volunteer, can continue availing of free gas worth $100 a month for the whole year of 2023 at the CMG San Jose Mobil Station.

Aguon was handed the plaque and award at the San Jose Mobil on Monday and was joined by Emily Villagomez, Mobil Station manager, and Sen. Edith Deleon Guerrero (D-Saipan).

Over the years, Aguon, who is a resident of Chalan Kanoa, has received many commendations and awards for conducting regular cleanups at Sugar Dock, other beach sites and public areas, and promoting awareness to protect the environment.

Aguon was handed a plaque with a letter of gratitude from Edward and Jovita Flores from JEMCO Ltd., which owns the gas station.

The plaque reads: "Given your recent efforts and hard work you have demonstrated throughout the year to clean up our environment, JEMCO Ltd. is pleased to continue our donation of $100 monthly gas to alleviate expenses incurred by you."

"This is a remarkable endeavor that you committed to the CNMI and its people. You may continue to gas your vehicle at our CMG San Jose Mobil Station at a monthly limit of $100. We sincerely appreciate and thank you for your untiring contribution. Keep it up," they said.

Aguon told *Saipan Tribune* after receiving the plaque: "I hope that people of the CNMI will follow my footsteps and volunteer whenever they can. I've been volunteering around Saipan for many years—I wake up at 6am and volunteer in the early morning before work, or even after work before I go home."

He thanked Edward and Jovita Flores for the recognition and gas allowance and said that he will continue his volunteer efforts on Saipan and hopes people who see him volunteer around will join him.

Aguon is employed with the Department of Lands and Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Recreation and is currently assigned at the Grotto. He maintains the area and ensures the patrons' safety.

In 2022, Aguon was named the Division of Parks and Recreation 2022 Employee of the Year and has been employed there for over 12 years.

LEIGH GASES

From left, Mobil station staff Arcely Lacsina, Mobil station manager Emily Villagomez, community volunteer Max Aguon, and Sen. Edith Deleon Guerrero (D-Saipan), pose for a photo outside the San Jose Mobil Gas Station on Monday after Aguon received a plaque of appreciation and an award of free gas for his volunteerism.

DOL

From page 1

openings compared to November 2022.

In December 2022, DOL saw an over 160% increase in job openings compared to November 2022.

"December 2022 was a challenging month for some employers facing dilemmas with the U.S. Department of Labor in delays of the TLC determination of their Notice of Acceptance to proceed with the posting requirement and other factors with USCIS' CW-1 'Touchback' rule. [However] the number of job openings reported a sharp increase of 160.52% when compared to November 2022's at 466, with December at 1,214," she said.

The Top 5 highest number of job openings were construction and extractions occupations, with 380 job openings; installation, maintenance, and repair occupations, with 270; building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations, with 196 openings; food preparation and serving related occupations, with 135; and production occupations, with 43 openings, Staffler said.

According to her, the increase just means that despite the hurdles the CNMI economy has faced due to the setbacks in the tourism industry, occupations like maintenance and construction remain solid due to ongoing developments in the CNMI.

"Despite the tourism industry setback by Super Typhoon Yutu in 2018 followed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the three major occupations group in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 as of Dec. 31 remain sturdy due to existing structures, recovery projects, ongoing new and current development projects. These occupations are construction and extraction occupations, installation, maintenance and repair occupations, followed by building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations," she said.

Meanwhile, compared to December 2021, it was reported that the total number of job openings increased by 39.86% in December 2022.

"In December 2022, the total number of job openings reported was 1,214. When compared to last year's December 2021 at 868, job openings show an increase of 39.86%," said Staffler.

The Top 5 highest number of job openings are the same.

MAFNAS

From page 1

Mafnas said drug traffickers are probably afraid to risk it, considering that plane passengers from the Philippines have to clear Guam Customs first, plus they have to pass through the U.S. Transportation Security Administration.

During Monday's news briefing about last week's seizure of $314,400 worth of "ice" at the U.S. Postal Service office in Chalan Kanoa, Mafnas said that the CNMI's "ice" supply used to come from China before the COVID-19 pandemic, but now it's coming from the U.S. mainland.

He said his information is that containers out of China are getting scrutinized by the Chinese government so traffickers are being forced to route their drugs through the U.S. mainland before getting them here in the CNMI.

Even in Guam, Mafnas said a lot of meth in the U.S. territory are being intercepted at the post office from the U.S. mainland.

"We're not surprised," he said, adding that they put adequate Customs personnel at the U.S. Postal Service office, both at the front and back of the facility, to ensure that all packages are screened and inspected, if necessary.

Last Thursday, CNMI Customs officers arrested Li Bing, a Chinese male national, who allegedly picked up a package containing 1,048 grams of crystal methamphetamine with a total street value of $314,400, during a routine inspection at the U.S. Postal Service office.

As for the drop in the street value of "ice" from the previous value of $500 per gram to $300 now, Mafnas said he is not going to discount the possibility that there may be an increase in the amount of crystal meth circulating in the community.

"When we see that the price goes down, then we are concerned," he said.

He pointed out that whenever they receive information about the "ice" supply, they don't just sit back and think about it. He said they immediately engage their officers to focus and use every resources and equipment they have such as the K9 dogs to make sure that this dangerous drug doesn't reach the community.

"If it slips through the cracks, we have our partners, the Department of Public Safety, that can take the lead on it," Mafnas said.

He said even private entities serve as their ears and eyes in the fight against illegal drugs.

Mafnas said he takes it seriously when he hears that "ice" is readily available out there or there is an increase in the number of "ice" users because this is Customs' responsibility to stop it at the port of entry. He said it is cheaper and easier to control drugs when they intercept it at the port of entry.

"I always mention to our new recruits, our new cadets that, 'Hey, it's not the Navy seals or the special forces who is responsible to guard our borders here. It's the CNM Customs Biosecurity. We are responsible,'" he said.

But comparing today's "ice" problem to how it was in 2013, Mafnas said it was worse back then because "ice" was "all over, available everywhere."

Department of Public Safety assistant chief of police Lawrence Camacho, who was also present during Monday's press briefing, said if "ice" is distributed in the community, there's a lot of investigation needed.

"Sometimes we don't catch all of it once it hits the street. When we get this on our front door, it is best that we get that before it gets distributed because it is more difficult for us to track it," said Camacho, referring to the importance of intercepting the meth at the ports and post office.

AUCTION

From page 1

receiver, is authorized to sell IPI's casino gaming equipment pursuant to the court's Oct. 26, 2021, memorandum decision, based on an outstanding judgment owed by IPI to plaintiff USA Fanter Corp.

Clear Management held the third auction on Jan. 6, 2023.

According to an order issued by District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona Manglona yesterday, she will rule on the motion to approve the sale next week, Feb. 9.

Aside from the approval of sales, White also requested the court to issue an order directing the receiver to collect the remaining 85% of the successful bids, to execute the appropriate bills of sale, and to deliver the items sold to the successful bidders.

White told the court that following the Jan. 6 auction, bids were received from six bidders and bids were accepted for 14 lots from two different bidders, two of which were successful bidders in previous auctions, and one a new bidder.

White noted that the total value of the bids accepted was $101,550.

The lawyer explained that each of the successful bidders has paid 15% of the bid and those funds are being held in the Law Offices of Michael A. White LLC Escrow Trust Account, pending the further orders of the court.

Meanwhile, Clear Management is set to close the fourth series of IPI gaming equipment auctions next week, Feb. 9.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, to date, the total sales from the first two series of auctions amounted to $711,600.

The court has since approved the sales for the last two auctions.

T'WAY

From page 1

double its current four flights a week to eight flights (including one extra flight on Feb. 28). This will increase the total flights for the month to 69 flights, with 12,969 available air seats.

"The doubling of flights by T'way in February is a very good sign of continued interest in the Marianas by South Koreans travelers, coupled with gradual stabilization of the exchange rate that we've battling for several months as a U.S. dollar-based destination," said MVA acting board chair Gloria Cavanagh. "Travel agents report almost 80% of the additional February flights are already booked, so this is a very positive indicator of where the market is heading."

In March 2023, although the Marianas is expecting to lose twice weekly direct flights by Asiana Airlines, T'way is scheduled to pick up the slack with twice weekly charter flights on Wednesdays and Saturdays, resulting in a small increase of 58 flights and 10,962 compared to January. The charter flights will continue twice weekly flights from March 1 to April 26, 2023. The additional T'way flights are only available for booking through main travel agencies in Korea under a co-op promotion between the airline and travel agencies.

According to the MVA, there are positive indications for even more flights from South Korea in April, but the airlines have yet to make a formal announcement. ***(MVA)***

Magofna says reconciling ARPA accounts 'quite complex'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Sen. Corina L. Magofna (Ind-Saipan), who chairs the Senate Committee on Resources, Economic Development, Programs and Gaming, said that reconciling the American Rescue Plan Act accounts is quite complex as there's a lot of transactions with multiple accounts.

In an interview with reporters at the Adopt-A-Place event at the Commissioner Joaquin S. Tudela Community Park in San Vicente last Sunday, Magofna said it's taking the team a little bit longer than expected to just review the ARPA accounts and reconcile them. That team is the Department of Finance and Office of Management and Budget Strategy Group that Gov. Arnold I. Palacios has just created. It is composed of representatives from Finance, OMB, and the Legislature in conducting a comprehensive review of the government's financial records, reconciliation, and identification of containment measures that will be implemented to sustain government operations.

Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang had discussed at a recent news briefing the CNMI's state of fiscal affairs and the steps the administration is taking to address the matter.

The 2022 transition report on the Department of Finance noted that a preliminary reconciliation determined that the CNMI received $481.8 million in ARPA funds, but as of Dec. 27, 2022, it has overspent and has a deficit of $86 million.

ARPA was used to fund disaster-related expenditures pending reimbursements from federal government, amounting to approximately $48.7 million. Upon reimbursements, the ARPA deficit will be reduced to $37.4 million, the transition report states.

Magofna said they aim to have the recommendations by the end of this month, if not next month. The senator said they are planning to do a revised budget for fiscal year 2023 so it's crucial that ARPA reconciliation is done.

Magofna said she is aware that the Palacios-Apatang administration is depending on the team to complete their findings and make sound recommendations that, hopefully, can minimize the deficit's impact on the CNMI's economy and the people.

She said the Finance team is working diligently, putting in a lot of time and effort so that the Legislature can do its part in revising the budget. Magofna said they want to make sure that they have a balanced budget based on their findings, and want to be thorough as possible so they will not get inaccurate information.

She said they meet weekly with the governor's team on a Friday. Between that Friday meetings, Magofna said there are also in-between meetings with the Senate and the House, or the Senate and the Finance team. "So we're constantly working. Even without the weekly meetings, we're just to kind of get updates from the Finance team and then with the Legislature," she said.

Magofna said they want to try and get this done as soon as possible.

"I know there's a lot of concerns out there. People are curious of what's been going on and it's our responsibility to get those things done. So we're doing our best," she said.

Magofna has a bachelor's degree in Business Accounting from the University of Phoenix and an associate degree in Accounting from the University of Hawaii.

USCIS redesigns green card and EAD

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced yesterday new designs to improve security of Permanent Resident Cards (also known as green cards) and Employment Authorization Documents. USCIS will begin issuing the redesigned cards on Jan. 30, 2023.

According to a USCIS news release yesterday, the new Green Card and EAD designs include:

- State-of-the-art technology that continues to safeguard national security and improve service for its customers;
- Improved detailed artwork;
- New tactile printing that is better integrated with the artwork;
- Enhanced optically variable ink;
- Highly secure holographic images on the front and back of the cards;
- A layer-reveal feature with a partial window on the back photo box; and
- Data fields displayed in different places than on previous versions.

To mitigate the risk of fraud and counterfeiting, USCIS redesigns the cards every three to five years. The agency launched the current cards in May 2017.

The introduction of the new designs does not mean that currently issued cards are invalid. Current cards generally remain valid until their expiration date (unless otherwise noted, such as through an automatic extension of a green card or EAD as indicated on a Form I-797, Notice of Action, or in a Federal Register notice). Some older green cards also do not have an expiration date. These older green cards without an expiration date generally remain valid.

USCIS will host a national engagement on the new designs of the green card and EAD in the coming days. ***(PR)***

Amata welcomes Armed Services Committee role for Pacific colleague

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Delegate Uifa'atali Amata (R-Amer. Samoa) is congratulating Delegate James Moylan of Guam (R-GU) and welcoming the addition of a Member from a Pacific territory to the House Armed Services Committee. Amata noted that important issues affecting the three Pacific U.S. territories often have similarities among all three, and the three Members of Congress have a broad range of complementary applicable Committee assignments, as well as working together on the Natural Resources Committee where they each serve.

"As a Member with a high rate of military service in my own district, I welcome the announcement of Congressman James Moylan's assignment to the House Committee on Armed Services," said Amata. "With the beginning of heightened focus on the Pacific, we need Pacific voices and perspectives on this key committee, which oversees our great military. I look forward to working with Congressman Moylan from my seats on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and Natural Resources to continue efforts to ensure the people of the Pacific are consulted and considered at the center of our Indo-Pacific strategy." ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BID
CUC-IFB-23-014

ISLAND WIDE ROAD RESTORATION, SAIPAN

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Island Wide Road Restoration, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity work consists of excavation, placing of flowable fill and asphalt to restore pavement areas cut by CUC to repair waterlines, sewerlines and customers' water service connections. Payment is only for the items completely installed and accepted by CUC and DPW. The duration of the contract is one year (365 calendar days) from date of award with an option to extend for an additional year if exercised by CUC.

The Bid Package will be emailed, upon receipt of a non-refundable payment from the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check, or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable), after registration at the CUC, Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Dandan, Saipan, between 7:30 AM to 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM to 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **February 6, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Seven (7) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-23-014, Island Wide Road Restoration"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 28, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other security acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 10, 2023** to Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Yvonne C. Ogumoro Acting Water & Wastewater Division Manager – via email yvonne.ogumoro@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

CHCC MOBILE OUTREACH CLINIC SCHEDULE

FEB	ADULT WELLNESS CHECK Update on personal medical history, blood pressure check, glucose check, resources & referrals
01	NAP Office, Aslito at 8AM - 12PM
11	Sugar King Park, Garapan at 8AM - 12PM (NMC Annual Health Fair) FREE Oral Screening & Fluoride Varnish for Children
15	Oleai Sports Complex (Ada Gym) at 8AM - 12PM **Last patient will be checked in at 11:30am**
FEB	CHILD WELLNESS CHECK For children 0-17 years old. Measurements and growth, anticipatory guidance, resources & referrals
17	WIC Clinic, Navy Hill at 1PM - 5PM **Last patient will be checked in at 4:30pm**
FEB	WOMANS WELLNESS CHECK For women who haven't seen a healthcare provider longer than 1 year, pap smears, breast exams, pre/post partum care, resources & referrals
23	Kagman Community Center at 8AM - 12PM **Last patient will be checked in at 11:30am**

WHAT TO BRING:
INSURANCE CARD
(medicaid, private insurances accepted)
VALID PHOTO ID
(drivers license, passport, mayors ID, etc)
Visit www.chcc.health for full CHCC schedule
Follow us @cnmichcc for updates

COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORP. Established October 2011 COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANAS

Further Questions?
Call 670-234-8950 ext. 2016 or 670-287-9929/9927

Public warned of rip currents until Saturday afternoon

The public is being warned that there is a high risk of rip currents from Wednesday evening through Saturday afternoon on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point., dangerous rip currents are expected in east facing reefs of the Marianas from this evening through Saturday afternoon.

Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

Surf is expected to reach 9 to 11 feet for the event. This will be a long event and this advisory may be extended. A high surf advisory may also be needed for these reefs.

Inexperienced swimmers should remain out of the water due to dangerous surf conditions.

Residents of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota are reminded to stay out of the water along east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR)***

CGC completes ethical code, decision-making process training

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Community Guidance Center delivered the two-day Ethics in Prevention: An Introduction to the Ethical Code and Decision-Making Process training on Jan. 19 to 20, 2023.

The training was facilitated by Pacific Behavioral Heath Collaborating Council executive director James Arriola, CGC administrative services manager Reyna Saures, and CGC Healthy Transitions program manager Tiara N. Evangelista.

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Community Guidance Center delivers the two-day Ethics in Prevention: An Introduction to the Ethical Code and Decision-Making Process training on Jan. 19 to 20, 2023. CHCC

The Pacific jurisdiction-adapted training curriculum was developed under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies, in consultation with Arriola.

With support from CHCC chief executive officer Esther L. Muña, the first cohort of the training included CGC director Joe Kevin Villagomez and the management team. Subsequent trainings in the upcoming months will be delivered to all CGC personnel, key CHCC management, behavioral health partners, and stakeholders on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

In an effort to build local and Pacific Islander workforce capacity in the area of behavioral health, CHCC, in collaboration with the PBHCC, strives to make local-based training more accessible to address ongoing needs. The course is based on the sciences of the field with adaptations for Pacific Islanders. This training will enhance the existing workforce with the opportunity for collaboration with other health and public services partners.

A regional Training of Trainers for the United States Affiliated Pacific Island Nations was conducted in November 2022 in Guam that brought a select group of representatives from the Pacific jurisdictions of the CNMI, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau. Future T.O.T. will be extended to the Republic of the Marshall Islands and American Samoa representatives. ***(CHCC)***

DELTA MANAGEMENT CORPORATION (SAIPAN)
Shell Gasoline Service Stations
Has an opening for an Auditor/Accounting Staff

For established small business
- Responsible for accurate auditing of daily sales reports for service stations
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and deltaspn@pticom.com

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Position: Order Clerk
Duties and Responsibilities: Verify customer and order information for correctness, checking it against previously obtained information as necessary. Receive customer orders and respond to customer complaints. Review orders for completeness. Inform customers of order information, such as unit prices, or shipping dates, and any anticipated delays. Obtain customers' names, addresses, and billing information. Recommend merchandise that will meet customers' needs. Prepare invoices according to orders received. Check inventory records to determine availability of requested merchandise. Collect payment for merchandise ordered, record transactions and send items such as cash and checks for further processing at the mXain office. File copies of invoices, delivery receipts and other pertinent documents. Adjust or record inventory movement such as warehouse transfers. Perform other related duties assigned.
Qualification Requirements: Must be High School graduate. Proficient with Personal Computers and software. Knowledge of basic mathematics and basic calculations. Good communication skills.

Position: Delivery Driver
Duties and Responsibilities: Drive a light truck or van, primarily to deliver goods or merchandise. Load and unload truck or van with merchandise verifying the contents against invoice documents. Perform mathematical computation in case of returns or adjustments. Present bill or invoice and collect payments for goods delivered. Turn in complete invoice copies and money received from deliveries. Inspect vehicle before using to ensure that vehicles are in proper working condition and record results in a vehicle log sheet. Report any mechanical problems encountered with the vehicle. May be required to load and unload merchandise in the container, help in stacking merchandise in the warehouse shelves manually or by using forklift. Perform other duties related to warehouse activity as needed from time to time.
Qualification Requirements: High School graduate with minimum one year work related experience required. Must be able to lift at least 50 lb. objects daily. Must be proficient in mathematical calculations. Must be able to speak and communicate clearly. Must have a valid CNMI driver's license and possess a good driving record. Must pass a Driver's Medical Health Screening including drug test.

Position: Warehouse Worker
Duties and Responsibilities: Unload merchandise from container to be stocked in warehouse shelves manually or by using dolly, pallet jack, or forklift. Examine and inspect merchandise for any damage or spoilage, reporting any discrepancy or damage. Receive and count merchandise, and record data manually or using computer. Clean and maintain supplies, tools, equipment, and storage or work areas to ensure compliance with safety regulations. Provide assistance or direction to other warehouse workers and perform other related duties assigned.
Qualification Requirements: Minimum one year work related experience required. Ability to perform physical activities that require considerable use of arms and legs and moving the whole body such as climbing, lifting, balancing, walking, stooping, and handling of materials. Must be able to do strenuous work such as unloading container vans, stacking, lifting, carrying, and moving heavy objects. Must be able to lift 50 to 80 lbs. frequently and up to 90 lbs. occasionally. Must pass food handler certification

To apply:
Apply in person or send complete and detailed resume to: Yaong Corporation Unit 6 Rem Ctr. Cheribiyan Dr Gualo Rai, Saipan, or mail to P.O. Box 505946, Saipan, MP 96950, or by e-mail to yaong.hr2@gmail.com. Police clearance, background check, and drug test may be required prior to employment.

MCS names its top teacher, support staff for 2023

Mount Carmel School participated yesterday in the national celebration of Catholic Schools Week and named Jener Pineda as its 2023 Teacher of the Year and Suzanne Jetnil as the 2023 Support Staff of the Year.

Besides Jetnil, Shyaralyn San Nicolas was named a finalist for the 2023 Support Staff of the Year award. The finalists for Teacher of the Year award included Zeno Deleon Guerrero, Tracy Taimanao, and Criselda Aldan.

The announcement of the awardees came about as Mount Carmel School is celebrating Catholic Schools Week and the theme of the day on Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2023, was "Celebrating Our Faculty and Staff."

The faculty and staff eligible for the awards were scored based on their performance, classroom observations, and involvement in extracurricular activities during the past year.

The 2023 Support Staff of the Year, Jetnil, has worked at Mount Carmel School for four years. Prior to her role as office manager, Jetnil also served as a third-grade homeroom teacher at MCS.

Jetnil is a product of Mount Carmel School, the Public School System, and is a Northern Marianas College graduate from the School of Education. Beyond her duties as a teacher and office manager, Jetnil has also assisted in organizational projects throughout the summer and is regarded as a kind and hardworking professional among her colleagues.

"I feel very humbled to receive the award for Support Staff of the Year and I promise to continue to do my best in supporting my fellow coworkers and our students," said Jetnil. "I would like to thank God for the blessings He's given me throughout my life. I would also like to thank my family, friends, and MCS Family for their love and support in all my endeavors."

MCS

All of Mount Carmel School's faculty and staff take a group photo after receiving their certificates of appreciation during the 2022-2023 Catholic Schools Week: Celebrating Our Faculty and Staff Ceremony on Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2023.

The finalist for Support Staff of the Year, San Nicolas, is a teacher aide for the K4 homeroom. San Nicolas, otherwise known as "Ms. Shy," has been with Mount Carmel School for two years and has been instrumental in organizational projects and activities at Mount Carmel School.

MCS

Suzanne Jetnil is awarded Mount Carmel School's 2022-2023 Support Staff of the Year during the school's Catholic Schools Week: Celebrating Our Faculty and Staff Ceremony.

MCS

All the awardees during Mount Carmel School's celebration of its faculty and staff stand for a group photo. In the photo, from left to right on the top row, are MCS president Frances Taimanao, MCS principal Filmah Buenaflor, MCS business manager John S. Blanco, MCS Parent Council secretary Mai Mendola, MCS Parent Council president Tina Crisostimo Tudela, MCS director of Institutional Development Victoria Deleon Guerrero, and MCS school counselor Tobed Smith. At the bottom row, left to right, is the 2023 Support Staff of the Year Finalist Shyaralyn San Nicolas, 2023 Support Staff of the Year Suzanne Jetnil, 2023 Teacher of the Year Jener Pineda, 2023 Teacher of the Year finalist Criselda Aldan, 2023 Teacher of the Year finalist Tracy Taimanao, and 2023 Teacher of the Year finalist Zeno Deleon Guerrero Jr.

MCS

Jener A. Pineda is awarded Mount Carmel School's 2022-2023 Teacher of the Year during the school's Catholic Schools Week: Celebrating Our Faculty and Staff Ceremony.

The third runner-up for Teacher of the Year was Deleon Guerrero, Jr. (2017 MCS AlumKnight). He serves as a high school English teacher, Theatre Club co-advisor, Student Council co-advisor, and the current faculty representative.

The second runner-up for the Teacher of the Year was Taimanao, who is currently a K5 homeroom teacher, a devout member of the San Vicente Parish, and an adjunct instructor at Northern Marianas College teaching elementary Chamorro.

The first runner-up for the 2023 Teacher of the Year was Aldan, who is a long-time MCS employee and has dedicated six years at MCS but taught at the Public School System for nine years. Currently, Aldan teaches English language arts, is a club advisor for Vox Knights and the National Junior Honor Society. As part of her community service efforts outside of MCS, Aldan serves a member of the board of directors of the Western Pacific Regions of the National Speech and Debate Association and the International Thespians Society. Aldan is regarded as a lively and beloved individual at MCS, often bringing smiles to the hearts of her school community.

MCS' 2023 Teacher of the Year, Jener, was named a finalist for the award in 2022 during the Catholic Schools Week: Celebrating Our Faculty and Staff Ceremony. While this is Pineda's fourth year at MCS, he brings over 20 years of educational experience and leadership.

Since joining the MCS team, Pineda has served in many capacities that continue to help the school fulfill its mission, "to educate the whole person to see with Christ's eyes." Beyond his duties as the math and theology instructor, Pineda is the campus minister, Faith Learning Community chairperson, Leadership team member, MCS choir advisor, religious retreat instructor, and coach for MCS Cross Country Team.

His service in the community includes being a lay minister in Kristo Rai Parish, a choir member, and lector for Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral. He is also the Mount Carmel Children's Choir Coordinator and a member of the Couple's for Christ.

"First of all, all the glory and praises to our Lord Almighty God who always strengthens me. Thank you very much for my family—my life and inspiration. Of course Bishop Ryan Jimenez for the divine guidance, the school board, and the leadership team headed by our very own Mrs. Frances Taimanao, my dear colleagues who I also offer this award for their hard work and dedication, our dearly beloved students—the reason why I am here—and parents headed by the Parent Council," said Pineda.

"I am so thankful and grateful for this very prestigious award. This won't be possible without the grace and love of God. He always strengthens and guides me in everything I do. Every day is always a learning and exciting experience with my students. In everything — love and serve the Lord."

In addition to the special awards given, all Mount Carmel School employees were awarded certificates of appreciation. Other awards distributed include the Perfect Attendance Award, which was awarded to Francis San Nicolas. The last award given was the Service Award, which is given to employees who have served at Mount Carmel School for 12 years. MCS employees who are given this award become honorary "AlumKnights" of Mount Carmel School. This year, the Service Award was awarded to Tobed Smith, Filmah Buenaflor, and MCS president Frances Taimanao.

Taimanao commends all the awardees and employees for their commitment and dedication to Mount Carmel School. "Catholic Schools Week is a beloved time for the school as we get to celebrate all our community members that help make MCS successful. Today, we celebrate our employees who continue to dedicate themselves to providing a quality education for our students and embody our mission every day, 'To educate the whole person to see with Christ's eyes," she said.

Catholic Schools Week is an annual celebration of Catholic education in the United States. 2023 marks the 49th year for the national organization to recognize the importance of Catholic education and all the efforts of its stakeholders at each Catholic institution. Mount Carmel School has participated in this celebration since 1995, making this the school's 28th year celebrating Catholic Schools Week. ***(PR)***

Opinion

Hafa Adai
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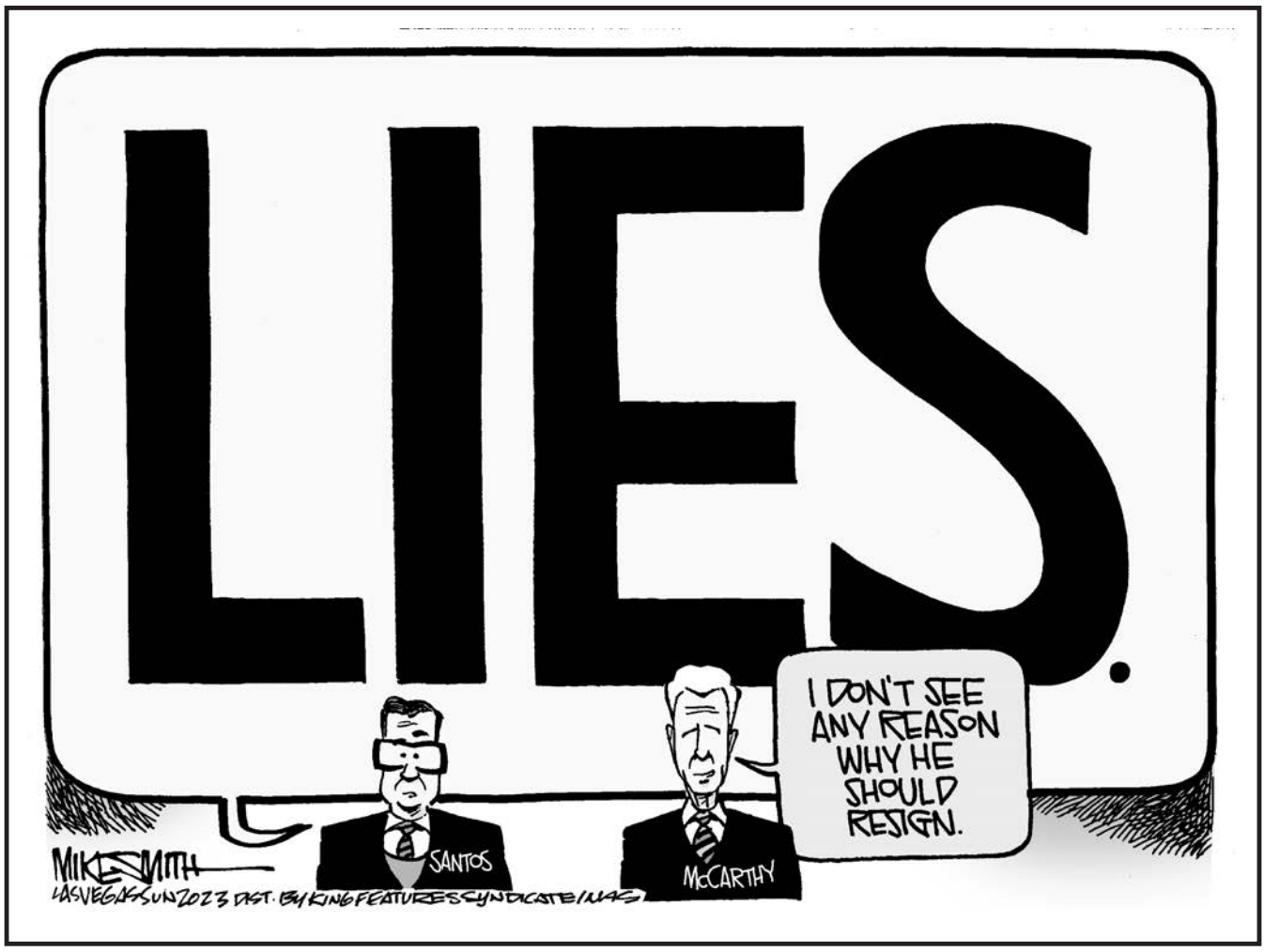

EDITORIAL

Lying liars and their constitutional right to keep on lying

Long before his own #MeToo demise as a U.S. senator, satirst Al Franken wrote a shocking investigative exposé of politicians and pundits who—prepare yourself—don't always tell the truth. The subtly titled book, "Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them," caused upheaval in Washington and led to a bipartisan national shake-up in politics. Politicians forever ended the practice of lying.

Oops. Correction: It actually got worse than ever, including the election of a president who reportedly lied more than 30,000 times in his single term.

Lying is not technically against the law, but it might be time for greater legislative clarity on the matter of deliberately deceiving the public for political or financial gain. Kansas City's former communications director, Chris Hernandez, is suing his ex-employers, saying they demoted him when he refused to lie on behalf of City Manager Brian Platt. The city, which disputes the accusation, is arguing in court that, even if officials did lie, deliberately misleading the public isn't illegal.

Increasingly across the country, the truth is on trial. The American public has been yanked so many different ways by falsehoods presented as fact that people simply don't know whom to believe anymore. Millions bought the lie that coronavirus vaccines are part of a government plot. Millions more believe the 2020 presidential election was stolen. Similar lies were behind the hammer attack that hospitalized then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband. Falsehoods are hardly harmless. People can die.

Fox News is currently in court defending itself for having advanced the lie that Dominion Voting Systems helped rig the 2020 presidential election against President Donald Trump. Fox doesn't deny the lies. Rather, it questions whether the lies caused actual harm.

Fox's Tucker Carlson defended himself in a 2020 slander lawsuit by arguing that the things he says on television are clearly exaggerations and aren't supposed to be believed by viewers. He won.

The big question hanging over Congress these days is whether Rep. George Santos, R-N.Y., should be ousted over his serial lying to win election. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy says that he won't fire Santos based on his massive biographical fraud. Rather, he'll only be ousted if Santos' lies broke the law.

Should lying be illegal? In 2005, Congress actually tried to criminalize lying about military service with the Stolen Valor Act. In 2012, the Justice Department tried to prosecute Xavier Alvarez for having claimed to be a Marine combat veteran and recipient of the Medal of Honor. The Supreme Court, however, sided with Alvarez. As frustrating and offensive as falsehoods might be, they are protected speech under the First Amendment, the court ruled.

Lies provoke outrage, for sure. But unless actual physical or financial harm can be proven, Americans will simply have to live with all these lying liars and the lies they tell.

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Biden's documents misstep helps Trump politically—and legally too

By DOYLE MCMANUS
Los Angeles Times

Doyle McManus is a columnist for The Los Angeles Times. *Readers may send him email at doyle.mcmanus@latimes.com*

When classified documents turned up in President Joe Biden's former office, his Delaware home and the garage housing his Corvette, the political impact was predictable. Republicans gleefully accused Biden of the same offense that prompted the FBI to raid former President Donald Trump's Florida estate last August.

The newly minted Republican chairmen of two House committees announced investigations of Biden—but not of Trump or former Vice President Mike Pence, who confessed that he too had found classified documents at home. Democrats lamented that Biden and his staff had squandered the moral high ground.

The differences between the cases are significant. Trump took hundreds of classified documents home; Biden a far smaller number, assuming no more turn up. Trump resisted returning documents to the government; Biden's lawyers turned them in promptly. Trump appears to have held on to documents on purpose; Biden's aides say his mistakes were inadvertent.

Still, the impact of the Biden documents is likely to extend beyond whataboutism and congressional hearings. Former prosecutors say the discoveries will make it more difficult for Jack Smith, the special prosecutor investigating Trump, to indict the former president for his Mar-a-Lago misdeeds.

"It complicates things," warned Donald Ayer, who was a top Justice Department official in the George H.W. Bush administration. "It would take a tin ear for Jack Smith to bring an indictment on the Mar-a-Lago case anytime soon."

In theory, perhaps, one investigation shouldn't affect the other. But these aren't run-of-the-mill cases. They involve a president, a former president and a former vice president—all three of whom appear to be running for president in 2024.

On a practical level, the Biden and Pence cases could make it harder to win a conviction against Trump—and that could make Smith, the special counsel, hesitate to bring an indictment.

Under Justice Department regulations, a prosecutor must consider whether the evidence in a case is strong enough to win conviction from a jury. The fact that Trump isn't the only former officeholder who took classified documents home will matter.

"It will inevitably affect a jury; they'll wonder why the government isn't prosecuting Joe Biden," said Paul Rosenzweig, another former Justice Department official. "A prosecutor doesn't want to go to trial and lose."

On a higher plane, Attorney General Merrick Garland wants to appear evenhanded—especially if a prosecutor he appointed is considering the unprecedented step of indicting a former president.

"We do not have different rules for Democrats or Republicans," Garland said last week. "We apply the facts and the law in each case in a neutral, nonpartisan manner."

That's why he appointed a second special counsel, Robert K. Hur, to investigate the Biden documents.

But that didn't solve the problem.

If Smith indicts Trump, but Hur does not indict Biden, Trump supporters will inevitably charge that a double standard is at work. Many of them will believe it.

It won't be only dyed-in-the-wool Trumpists who are troubled. The spectacle of Biden's Justice Department prosecuting his predecessor would discomfit many who don't love Trump.

In an ideal world, both prosecutors could report their findings and explain their decisions at the same time, so the rest of us could compare the two cases side by side.

But the two special counsels are supposed to operate independently, without day-to-day supervision from the Justice Department. There's no mechanism for them to coordinate their decisions.

"Neither special counsel will be in a position to explain how his decisions are consistent with the other's," Jack Goldsmith of Harvard Law School wrote last week in The New York Times. "Nor can the attorney general obviously do so, since the key decisions are formally out of his control."

Even if the two special counsels wanted to report simultaneously, the timing of their cases may get in the way. The FBI has been investigating Trump's Mar-a-Lago documents for almost a year. The investigation of Biden's documents, by contrast, started only a few weeks ago.

Special counsels usually have the luxury of working without a fixed deadline. But it's in the public interest to resolve these cases before voters begin choosing the candidates for the 2024

See BIDEN'S on Next Page

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The Saipan Tribune reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Our children can handle mass shootings. And that's a shame

By PAUL THORNTON
LOS ANGELES TIMES

For anyone worried about how children handle mass shootings like the one in Monterey Park, I have an answer: Probably better than American children of any previous generation.

That shooting, like those recently in Goshen and Half Moon Bay, wasn't at a school. Using the grim calculus of American gun culture, that fact might put them a notch below Uvalde and Newtown on the mass shooting horror scale. This may be callous, but it's the kind of assessment that happens in a country where there are more mass shootings in a year than days.

For those of us who live in the neighborhood, the Lunar New Year's Eve killings affected every institution in the community. My children attend school in the Alhambra Unified School District, which also serves Monterey Park, the city to Alhambra's south—and is also working-class and majority Asian.

The schools here handled the trauma of the tragedy sensitively in a way that only a parent living in a country with more guns than people can appreciate. Hours after the shooting, the AUSD superintendent emailed parents a statement that expressed sadness and condolences, and also dispensed practical advice for talking to children about grief and the attack: Don't let the news do the talking, and ask children to share their thoughts with you. It also reminded parents who own guns that state law requires them to store their weapons safely.

It was refreshingly utilitarian. Mass shootings, both in school and in the community, are common enough that we need a to-do list. The superintendent's note felt like the educational equivalent of "news you can use."

Still, something about the district's letter didn't sit right. So I sent it to two of my cousins in Oslo, Norway, who have children similar in age to mine, and asked them what they thought. Their responses were what you might expect in a country that had a total of seven firearm homicides in 2021.

One wrote back: "We have never gotten a letter like this. And I can't imagine ever being sent a letter like this."

The other: "I'm shocked! No. I have never received a letter about something like this."

This reflects the high price that only we in America pay for firearm freedom: No matter where you stand on the Second Amendment or how it's applied, you cannot deny the reality of children growing up with mass shootings as a routine part of life.

The way I talked about earthquake drills and my parents recall hiding under desks to prepare for World War III, my children talk about "lockdown drills." They know to keep utterly silent when their teacher shuts off the light, locks the door and covers the door window with a map or seating chart or any opaque material that will block a killer's view inside. Kids in the bathroom can't lock their doors, so they know to crouch on a toilet seat and hope a gunman doesn't check the stalls.

Where children know to follow orders, teachers think of ways to improvise. Some educators have been forced to think about how many first graders can cram inside a closet long enough to hide from a killer. "When we are in the closet, we sit and I tell them we're playing a version of hide-and-seek," one teacher wrote in a letter to The Times, after the shooting in Uvalde, Texas, last May. "When they ask why are we practicing this drill, I tell them it's because we don't want whatever bad is happening outside to get into our 'safe' classroom."

My children say their teachers and friends have talked about the Monterey Park tragedy in class and on the playground. They're aware that the dance studio on Garfield Avenue in Alhambra, where Brandon Tsay heroically disarmed the gunman, isn't far from our neighborhood. And they've assured me how well they've been taught in class to hide if the next shooting is on their campus.

In other words, they can handle this. That they will need to is distressing, too.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

NMI Board of Nursing responds to Jan. 26 article

In response to the article on Jan. 26 report by Ms. Kimberly B. Esmores, as chairwoman of the NMI Board of Nursing, I would like to express my disappointment with the lack of research and due diligence done to produce a biased report that taints the image of a board. With that in mind, let me first clarify and educate the community that the NMI BON prioritizes its fiduciary role to serve and protect the people of *our* community.

Neither Ms. Esmores nor *Saipan Tribune* has made an effort to reach out to our office nor have emailed the office for any information or comments about the complaints. If Ms. Bautista has had difficulty reaching the office via phone, our email listed on our website and Facebook social media page are open channels to attempt to reach the board. The NMI Board of Nursing acknowledges the complaint as reported in her article. However, the ethical principle of truth and accuracy was not evident in this article since the report has failed to hear our side of the story.

The NMI Board of Nursing is a small autonomous board with five office staff and seven board members. Board members are not required by law to have meetings every week or every month but are required to meet quarterly. In the past, the board members review applications that have completed the requirements quarterly, which took longer for any applicant to get an approval. This took about three to nine months. Since then, as chairperson of the board, I encouraged all board members to review applications weekly or when time permits. All six board members have full time nursing jobs and one community member. The NMI Board encourages all graduate nurses to apply as soon as possible because we want these nurses to sit for their exam due to the fact that we have a shortage of nurses across the nation.

Our board members do not get paid and are not compensated financially for the time spent on their own time in performing their fiduciary duty. As chair, I have dedicated my time to come in to the office every week to do application reviews and sign what needs to be sent out (even though we are only required to come in quarterly). Our office personnel have worked diligently to filter through thousands of documents received by our office, on top of responding to queries from applicants not only in the CNMI and the United States, but internationally. So yes, our phone lines will always be busy. However, we do provide updates to applicants as they come, though we are not able to provide some in greater details, trust that they will be reviewed, and response will be received.

The nursing profession and the commitment to the safety of the community is paramount. Rules and regulations vary in different jurisdictions. Hence, the requirements and verification process differ. Nurses may apply to any other U.S. Boards of Nursing to be licensed to practice the profession. In the article, the complainant is from Australia who turned in her application for Certificate of Good Standing on Dec. 5, 2022 (because it was on the *Tribune*). Every applicant is reviewed on a first-come, first-served basis on who applies first and who has provided that all requirements have been met and legitimate documents have been received and submitted all their expected records. Some records are not legible or information compared to application is not same. The office of the NMI Board has done a great job thus far compared to the previous years.

The Nursing Board office has numerous applicants from the Philippines and other countries, even from Guam. The bulk of our applicants come from the Philippines and other non-U.S. countries because we do not require a Social Security Number when applying, compared to other nursing boards in the United States and territories (Guam, American Samoa and Virgin Islands). Any graduate nurse can apply on any nursing board, but most choose the NMI BON as a social security I.D. number is not required and we do, in fact, approve faster than any other boards. Nowhere is it advertised and no one is asked to choose our Board of Nursing but we appreciate their business when they do choose our board in hopes of acquiring new RNs to work and reside in the CNMI. We have recently discovered several online blogs and YouTube videos that applaud the efficiency and ease of applying to our office. The NMI Board of Nursing is also on some YouTubers who applaud our office.

These applicants (90%) are applying to sit for the National Council Licensure Examination; 95% are not applying to work in the CNMI. When their applications are approved, they get to again apply to Pearson Vue to set the date for their exam. Applications that are complete are reviewed by the board members to make sure that the papers are not fraudulent and that the applicant faced no disciplinary action in their country (safety of our community). It takes about one to three months for our applicants to get an approval to sit for the NCLEX exam. This is the same as for Endorsement and Certificate of Good Standing. The reason for the one to three months' turnover time is because sometimes applicants fail to send other required documents such as certification of employment, signed passport photo, transcripts etc.

The NMI BON does acknowledge that there is always room for continuous improvement with processing time without compromising our value to ensure that applications received are legitimate, which is why we have applied with the National Council State Board of Nursing for their Optimal Regulatory Board System in 2020 and was waitlisted to start this year, 2023. The BON has invested approximately $50,000 to upgrade and expedite the application process. Since this platform is paperless, it would enable all board members to view and review applications even outside the office and may also give room for applicants to submit applications electronically. The system upgrade has been in the works and we are happy that it is finally coming along to bring greater efficiency to our office operations.

Processing and reviewing applications to sit for NCLEX, requests for COGS, endorsement, etc., are not the main reason why the BON exist. We also look after the validity of nursing education and training within the NMI. More importantly, the NMI Board of Nursing has other significant fiduciary duties, such as ensuring that APRNs, RNs, LPNs, CNAs and techs who are licensed by the NMI abide by our state NPA or Nurse Practice Act. The board has the power to terminate, suspend, or sanction licensees who are non-compliant with our NPA. We ensure our nurses have no past or present disciplinary actions before issuing them a license to care for our CNMI community. The community is more than welcome to submit complaints to the BON in regards to nursing issues and those complaints are investigated if a licensee is found to be in violation of the NPA.

The headline that "our voices are not being heard" is a highly inaccurate and outrageous. The NMI Board of Nursing holds a great responsibility in making sure that applications are complete and not fraudulent, so yes, it will take time. This is why applicants are encouraged to submit applications or requests in advance to avoid frustration and we will continue to do our best to respond on time.

Thank you and *si yuus ma'ase.*

Roca Quitugua Sablan, RN, CRNP, Nurse Midwife
Chairwoman, NMI Board of Nursing

BIDEN'S

From Page 8

presidential election.

"The clock is ticking," Rosenzweig noted. But in the Biden case, "Hur won't be done before the fourth quarter of this year. It can't be done any faster."

Garland can't control the prosecutors' timing—at least not without violating the principle that they are intended to be independent of the attorney general.

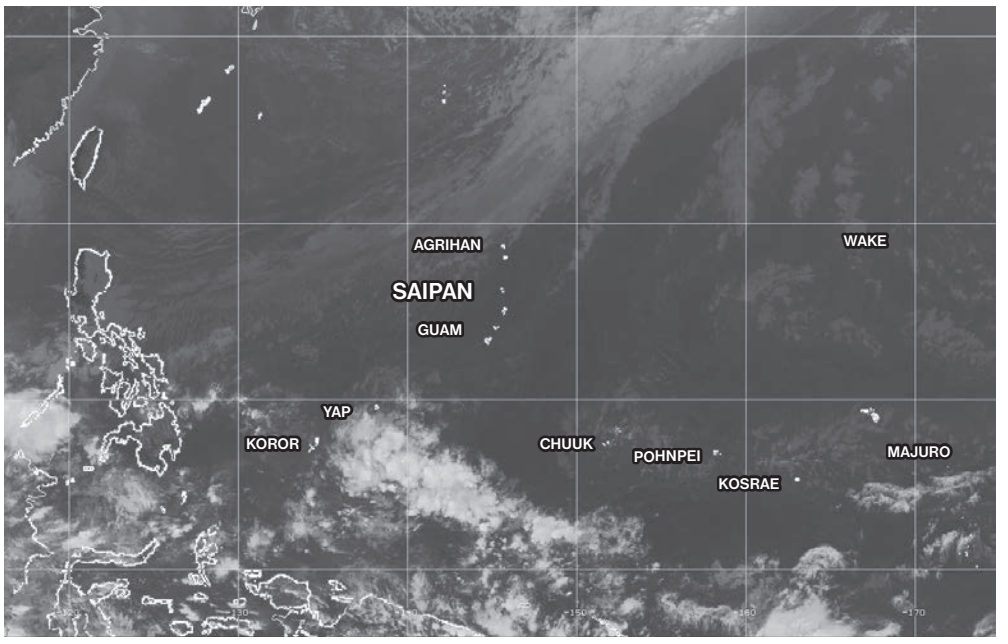
But the two cases could still end up on his desk. So will the burden of explaining to Americans why the outcome was fair. If Garland hoped appointing special counsels would get him off the hook, it appears he guessed wrong.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Isolated showers. Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny
86º 77º	86º 77º	85º 76º	85º 78º	84º 77º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 9:05 AM, TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2023

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Guam Doppler weather radar shows only a few showers moving through the Marianas Waters this morning. The buoys reveal combined seas of 6 to 8 feet composed of east swell and northwest swell, with a few wind waves added in.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Mostly Sunny/Wind	85° / 77°
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	82° / 76°
Yap	Isolated Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 81°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	86° / 81°
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	87° / 78°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:14 PM
Thursday	6:45 AM	6:15 PM
Friday	6:45 AM	6:15 PM
Saturday	6:45 AM	6:16 PM
Sunday	6:45 AM	6:16 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	3:03 AM	2:26 PM
Thursday	-	3:57 AM	3:16 PM
Friday	-	4:48 AM	4:08 PM
Saturday	-	5:37 AM	5:00 PM
Sunday	-	6:22 AM	5:52 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Mostly Sunny	73° / 63°
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	41° / 19°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	70° / 64°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	82° / 68°
London	Sunny	55° / 36°
Los Angeles	Sunny	80° / 51°
Manila	Partly Cloudy	90° / 75°
Melbourne	Rain	64° / 50°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	81° / 72°
New York	Cloudy	43° / 29°
Osaka	Sunny	48° / 37°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	48° / 37°
Busan	Mostly Sunny	43° / 30°
Rome	Mostly Sunny	57° / 46°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	50° / 35°
San Francisco	Sunny	63° / 45°
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	34° / 23°
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny/Wind	57° / 40°
Washington, DC	Rain	45° / 32°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
6:42 AM	High Tide	1.44
11:18 AM	Low Tide	1.17
3:46 PM	High Tide	1.49
11:45 PM	Low Tide	-0.26

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2023

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:30AM	7:25AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:50PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	3:15AM	6:55AM	1, 4, 5, 7
TW9308	3:50AM	7:20AM	1, 4, 5, 7
OZ624	3:50PM	7:40PM	3, 6
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA189	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:20PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:20PM	3, 6
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	8:45PM	2:15AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7
TW9307	9:20PM	2:50AM+1	3, 4, 6, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.	

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.	

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

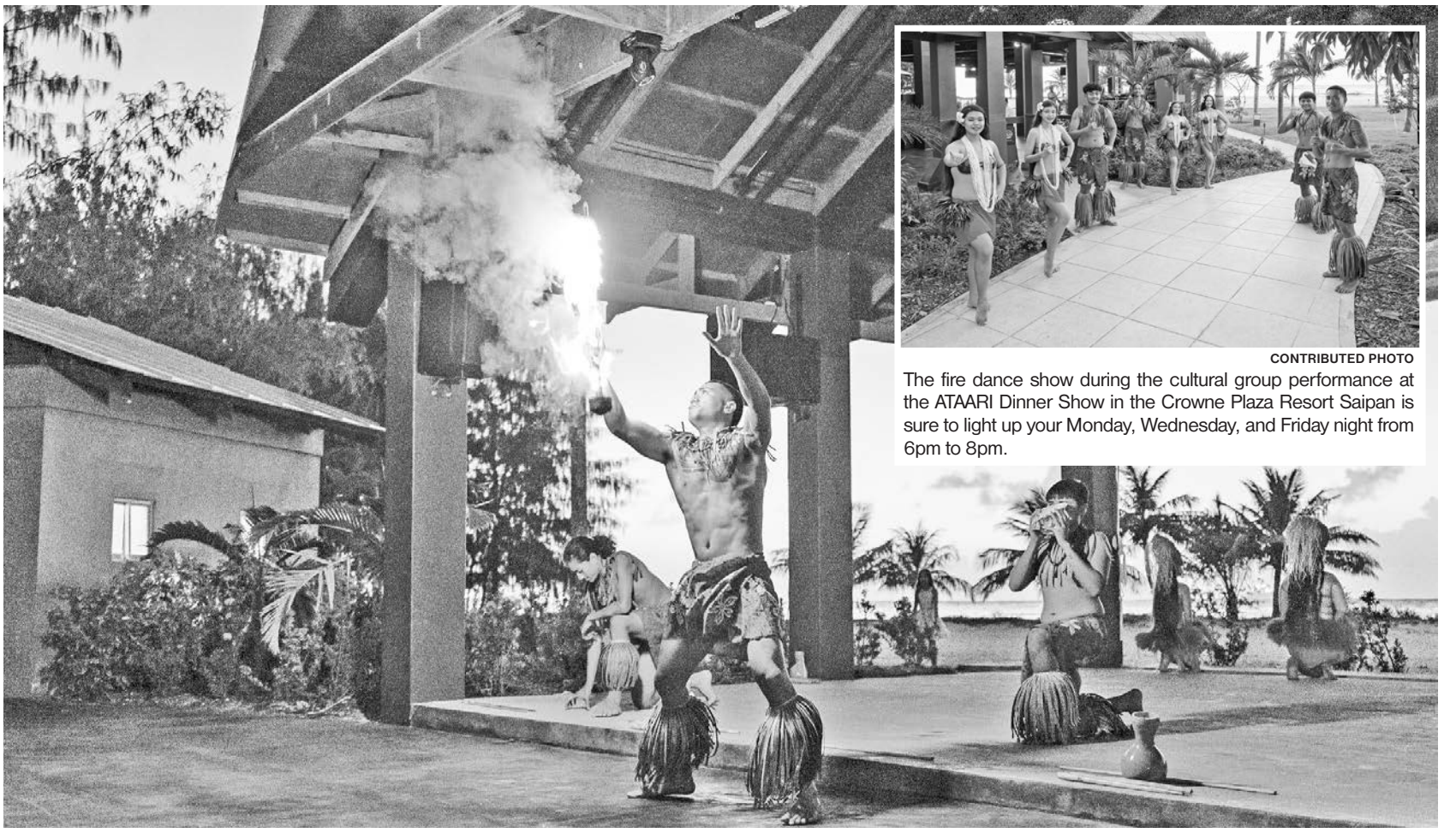
TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Light up your night with ATAARI Dinner Show

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The fire dance show during the cultural group performance at the ATAARI Dinner Show in the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan is sure to light up your Monday, Wednesday, and Friday night from 6pm to 8pm.

You can now light up your night with the ATAARI Dinner Show at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, set with the beautiful backdrop of the golden hour sunset from 6pm to 8pm, starting tomorrow, Feb. 1, 2023.

Delight and entertain all your senses starting with music from the live band to light up your appetite as you make your way to the buffet line and indulge your flavor palettes with the menu which includes smoky pork ribs, applewood smoked chicken roast, sweet and sour catch of the day, Chamorro sausage, red rice, and the island-style chicken curry, rounded off with a delicious dessert buffet including lantiyas and cinnamon custard.

As you eat, watch the sunset drop over Micro Beach and streak the skies a fiery red and orange, then be entertained with a seemingly never-ending engagement of cultural dance performances from the Marianas and the Pacific Islands of Hawaii, Tahiti, Samoa, and New Zealand—complete with colorful costume changes and a blazing hot 5-minute fire dance show.

The show is set for every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 6pm to 8pm. An introductory local resident price of $55 for adults and $25 for children (Ages 4-11) is available until March 31. Local ID must be presented on arrival to avail of the special offer.

The dinner price includes iced tea and water, while bar beverages are charged on consumption. A 2-hour beverage package is also available.

For reservations, email restaurants.cprsaipan@ihg.com or call (670) 234-6412.

Chef Zenn Tomokane, executive sous chef at the Crowne Plaza, said that "Ataari is the Carolinian word for "a sumptuous entertainment or meal for many guests".

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Indulge your flavor palettes with the ATAARI Dinner Show menu consisting of smoky pork ribs, applewood smoked chicken roast, sweet and sour catch of the day, Chamorro sausage, red rice, and the island style chicken curry, rounded off with a delicious dessert buffet including lantiyas and cinnamon custard.

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan general manager Robert Coates said it's exciting that the dinner show is now open for local residents and tourists.

"We are thrilled to open ATAARI Dinner show on Wednesday, Feb. 1. It's a fun action-packed evening for all to dine on a wonderful dinner buffet and enjoy the beautiful music and dance of the islands. We're looking forward to welcoming local residents and visitors to join in the fun of ATAARI Dinner Show."

Coates added in an interview after the pre-opening of the dinner show on Monday, Jan. 30, that he is grateful for guests who came out, including the tour agencies from the Korean and Japanese market, along with some local residents.

He also thanked the entertainers and the hosts in the band. "They're a great group of people, a lot of fun, very flexible, very engaging, and so they were great. And of course, big thanks to the [Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan] team for putting the night on too. They've worked very hard to get the dinner show ready to open. It's been a big job."

"So we're up and running, it was a lot of work behind the scenes, and it's great to be open," he said.

As an international hotel and brand, Coates said that it's important for Saipan to position itself out there in the international markets and with the dinner show, it's one component to attract more international visitors.

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan is a 422-room hotel located in Garapan. Guests will be greeted by the resort's lush tropical gardens and panoramic view of Micro Beach, with Crowne Plaza's warm and friendly hospitality ensuring a seamless arrival.

For media queries, email Suneerat Murphy, Cluster Marketing manager, at suneerat.murphy@ihg.com, or Bruce Gallie, Area Sales & Marketing director, at bruce.gallie1@ihg.com

IMF upgrades outlook for the global economy in 2023

WASHINGTON (AP)—The outlook for the global economy is growing slightly brighter as China eases its zero-COVID policies and the world shows surprising resilience in the face of high inflation, elevated interest rates and Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine.

That's the view of the International Monetary Fund, which now expects the world economy to grow 2.9% this year. That forecast is better than the 2.7% expansion for 2023 that the IMF predicted in October, though down from the estimated 3.4% growth in 2022.

The IMF, a 190-country lending organization, foresees inflation easing this year, a result of aggressive interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve and other major central banks. Those rate hikes are expected to slow the consumer demand that has driven prices higher. Globally, the IMF expects consumer inflation to fall from 8.8% last year to 6.6% in 2023 and 4.3% in 2024.

"Global conditions have improved as inflation pressures started to abate," the IMF chief economist, Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas, said at a news conference in Singapore. "The road back to a full recovery with sustainable growth, stable prices and progress for all has only started."

A big factor in the upgrade to global growth was China's decision late last year to lift anti-virus controls that had kept millions of people at home. The IMF said China's "recent reopening has paved the way for a faster-than-expected recovery.''

The IMF now expects China's economy—the world's second-biggest, after the United States—to grow 5.2% this year, up from its October forecast of 4.4%. Beijing's economy eked out growth of just 3% in 2022—the first year in more than 40, the IMF noted, that China has expanded more slowly than the world as a whole. But the end of virus restrictions is expected to revive activity in 2023.

Boeing bids farewell to an icon, delivers its last 747 jumbo jet

SEATTLE (AP)—Boeing bids farewell to an icon on Tuesday: It's delivering its final 747 jumbo jet.

Since its first flight in 1969, the giant yet graceful 747 has served as a cargo plane, a commercial aircraft capable of carrying nearly 500 passengers, a transport for NASA's space shuttles, and the Air Force One presidential aircraft. It revolutionized travel, connecting international cities that had never before had direct routes and helping democratize passenger flight.

But over about the past 15 years, Boeing and its European rival Airbus have introduced more profitable and fuel efficient wide-body planes, with only two engines to maintain instead of the 747′s four. The final plane is the 1,574th built by Boeing in the Puget Sound region of Washington state.

A big crowd of current and former Boeing workers is expected for the final send-off. The last one is being delivered to cargo carrier Atlas Air.

"If you love this business, you've been dreading this moment," said longtime aviation analyst Richard Aboulafia. "Nobody wants a four-engine airliner anymore, but that doesn't erase the tremendous contribution the aircraft made to the development of the industry or its remarkable legacy."

Nation

President Biden to end COVID-19 emergencies on May 11

AP
President Joe Biden talks with reporters on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Monday, Jan. 30, 2023, after returning from an event in Baltimore on infrastructure.

WASHINGTON (AP)— President Joe Biden informed Congress on Monday that he will end the twin national emergencies for addressing COVID-19 on May 11, as most of the world has returned closer to normalcy nearly three years after they were first declared.

The move to end the national emergency and public health emergency declarations would formally restructure the federal coronavirus response to treat the virus as an endemic threat to public health that can be managed through agencies' normal authorities.

It comes as lawmakers have already ended elements of the emergencies that kept millions of Americans insured during the pandemic. Combined with the drawdown of most federal COVID-19 relief money, it would also shift the development of vaccines and treatments away from the direct management of the federal government.

Biden's announcement comes in a statement opposing resolutions being brought to the floor this week by House Republicans to bring the emergency to an immediate end. House Republicans are also gearing up to launch investigations on the federal government's response to COVID-19.

Then-President Donald Trump's Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar first declared a public health emergency on Jan. 31, 2020, and Trump later declared the COVID-19 pandemic a national emergenc y that March. The emergencies have been repeatedly extended by Biden since he took office in January 2021, and are set to expire in the coming months. The White House said Biden plans to extend them both briefly to end on May 11.

"An abrupt end to the emergency declarations would create wide-ranging chaos and uncertainty throughout the health care system — for states, for hospitals and doctors' offices, and, most importantly, for tens of millions of Americans," the Office of Management and Budget wrote in a Statement of Administration Policy.

More than 1.1 million people in the U.S. have died from COVID-19 since 2020, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including about 3,700 last week.

Congress has already blunted the reach of the public health emergency that had the most direct impact on Americans, as political calls to end the declaration intensified. Lawmakers have refused for months to fulfill the Biden administration's request for billions more dollars to extend free COVID vaccines and testing. And the $1.7 trillion spending package passed last year and signed into law by Biden put an end to a rule that barred states from kicking people off Medicaid, a move that is expected to see millions of people lose their coverage after April 1.

"In some respects, the Biden administration is catching up to what a lot of people in the country have been experiencing," said Larry Levitt, the executive vice president for health policy at Kaiser Family Foundation. "That said, hundreds of people a day are still dying from COVID."

Still, some things will change for Americans once the emergency expires, Levitt pointed out.

The costs of COVID-19 vaccines are also expected to skyrocket once the government stops buying them, with Pfizer saying it will charge as much as $130 per dose. Only 15% of Americans have received the recommended, updated booster that has been offered since last fall.

People with private insurance could have some out-of-pocket costs for vaccines, especially if they go to an out-of-network provider, Levitt said. Free at-home COVID tests will also come to an end. And hospitals will not get extra payments for treating COVID patients.

Legislators did extend for another two years telehealth flexibilities that were introduced as COVID-19 hit, leading health care systems around the country to regularly deliver care by smartphone or computer.

The Biden administration had previously considered ending the emergency last year, but held off amid concerns about a potential "winter surge" in cases and to provide adequate time for providers, insurers and patients to prepare for its end.

7th Memphis officer disciplined, EMTs fired in Nichols death

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)— Two more Memphis police officers have been disciplined and three emergency responders fired in connection with the death of Tyre Nichols, officials said Monday, widening the circle of punishment for the shocking display of police brutality after video showed many more people failed to help him beyond the five officers accused of beating him to death.

Officer Preston Hemphill, who is white, was relieved of duty shortly after Nichols' Jan. 7 arrest, the police department announced. Later in the day it said another officer had also been relieved, but without naming the person or specifying what role they played in the incident.

That brought the total number of Memphis officers who have been disciplined to seven, including the five Black officers who were fired and charged last week with second-degree murder and other offenses in Nichols' beating and Jan. 10 death.

Also Monday, Memphis Fire Department officials announced the dismissal of emergency medical technicians Robert Long and JaMicheal Sandridge and Lt. Michelle Whitaker. The EMTs had previously been suspended.

Fire Chief Gina Sweat said in a statement that the department received a call from police to respond to a report of a person who had been pepper-sprayed. The workers arrived at 8:41 p.m. as Nichols was handcuffed on the ground and slumped against a squad car, the statement said.

Long and Sandridge, based on the nature of the call and information they were told by police, "failed to conduct an adequate patient assessment of Mr. Nichols," the statement said. Whitaker and the driver remained in the engine.

An ambulance was called, and it arrived at 8:55 p.m., the statement said. An emergency unit cared for Nichols and left for a hospital with him at 9:08 p.m. — 27 minutes after Long, Sandridge and Whitaker arrived, officials said.

An investigation determined that all three violated "multiple" policies and protocols, the statement said, adding that "their actions or inactions on the scene that night do not meet the expectations of the Memphis Fire Department."

The killing of Nichols, who was Black, has led to days of public discussion of how police forces can treat Black citizens with excessive violence, regardless of the race of both the police officers and those being policed.

On body camera footage from the initial stop, Hemphill is heard saying that he stunned Nichols and declaring, "I hope they stomp his ass."

Nichols' death was the latest example in a long string of early police accounts regarding use of force that were later shown to have minimized or ignored violent and sometimes deadly encounters.

Memphis Police Department officers used a stun gun, a baton and their fists as they pummeled Nichols during the nighttime arrest. Video shows Nichols running away from officers toward his house after he was pulled over on suspicion of reckless driving. Nichols, a 29-year-old father, was heard calling for his mother and seen struggling with his injuries as he sat helpless on the pavement, video footage released Friday showed.

Reports: New grand jury in NY examining Trump hush money

NEW YORK (AP)—Manhattan prosecutors investigating Donald Trump have convened a new grand jury to hear evidence in a years-old probe into payments made to keep the porn star Stormy Daniels quiet about an alleged sexual encounter with the former president, according to multiple news reports.

The news outlets, citing unnamed sources, reported that witnesses started testifying before the grand jury on Monday, signaling an escalation in what Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg has alluded to as "the next chapter" in his office's Trump investigation.

A spokesperson for Bragg's office declined comment. In a post to his Truth Social platform, Trump blasted Bragg as the "Radical Left Manhattan D.A." and said the new grand jury was "a continuation of the Greatest Witch Hunt of all time."

Grand juries have been convened before in New York to explore the possibility of criminal charges against Trump, but to date none have issued an indictment.

The Manhattan grand jury would be the latest legal threat to Trump as he ramps up his presidential campaign.

A special grand jury in Atlanta has investigated whether Trump and his allies committed any crimes while trying to overturn his 2020 election loss in Georgia. Last month, the House Jan. 6 committee voted to make a criminal referral to the Justice Department for Trump's role in sparking the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. The FBI is also investigating Trump's storage of classified documents.

The hush-money investigation in New York involves payments of $130,000 to Daniels and $150,000 to former Playboy model Karen McDougal to buy their silence in the run-up to Trump's 2016 election victory. Trump has denied having affairs with either woman.

Trump's former personal lawyer and fixer, Michael Cohen, made the payment to Daniels through his own company and said he then was reimbursed by Trump. McDougal's payment was made through the publisher of the supermarket tabloid the National Enquirer, which then squelched her story in a journalistically dubious practice known as "catch-and-kill" to help Trump become president.

Asia

Suicide bomber kills 83 at mosque in Pakistan

AP

Security officials and rescue workers search bodies at the site of suicide bombing, in Peshawar, Pakistan, Monday, Jan. 30, 2023.

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP)—A Pakistani hospital spokesman says the death toll from the previous day's suicide bombing at a mosque in the northwestern city of Peshawar has risen to 83.

Mohammad Asim, the spokesman, says more bodies were retrieved from the rubble of the mosque overnight and early on Tuesday, and several of those critically injured died in hospital.

"Most of them were policemen," Asim said of the victims.

Bilal Faizi, the chief rescue official, said rescue teams are still carefully removing the rubble at the site of the mosque —located inside a police compound in a high security zone of the city—as more people are believed trapped inside after the roof caved in from the explosion.

He said the bombing also wounded more than 150 people. It was not clear how the bomber was able to slip into the walled compound in a high-security zone with other government buildings.

Also, on Tuesday mourners were burying the bombing victims at different graveyards in Peshawar and elsewhere.

Authorities have not determined who was behind the bombing.

Shortly after the explosion on Monday, Sarbakaf Mohmand, a commander for the Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, claimed responsibility for the attack in a post on Twitter.

But hours later, TTP spokesperson Mohammad Khurasani distanced the group from the bombing, saying it was not its policy to target mosques, seminaries and religious places, adding that those taking part in such acts could face punitive action under TTP's policy. His statement did not address why a TTP commander had claimed responsibility for the bombing.

"The sheer scale of the human tragedy is unimaginable. This is no less than an attack on Pakistan," tweeted Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, who visited the wounded in Peshawar and vowed "stern action" against those behind the bombing. He expressed his condolences to families of the victims, saying their pain "cannot be described in words."

Pakistan, which is mostly Sunni Muslim, has seen a surge in militant attacks since November, when the Pakistani Taliban ended their cease-fire with government forces.

NATO chief wants firmer ties with Japan

TOKYO (AP)—NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, in Japan as part of his East Asia tour, said "our security is closely interconnected" and called for stronger ties with Japan as Russia's war on Ukraine raises global dangers and shows that democracies need stronger partnerships.

Japan has been quick to join the U.S.-led economic sanctions against Russia's war on Ukraine and provided humanitarian aid and non-combative defense equipment for the Ukrainians.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has sounded alarm that Russia's aggression in Europe could happen in Asia, where concerns are growing over already assertive China and its escalating tension near Taiwan. Japan also has significantly stepped up ties with NATO recently.

"The war in Ukraine also demonstrates that our security is closely interconnected," Stoltenberg said during his visit at the Iruma Air Base north of Tokyo, where he started his Japan visit Tuesday after arriving late Monday from South Korea.

"If President (Vladimir) Putin wins in Ukraine it will be a tragedy for the Ukrainians, but it will also send a very dangerous message to authoritarian leaders all over the world because then the message will be that when they use military force they can achieve their goals," he said. "So the war in Ukraine matters for all of us."

Stoltenberg said his visit to Japan "is a way to further strengthen the partnership between NATO and our highly valued partner Japan."

His is set to meet with Kishida and hold a joint news conference later Tuesday.

Japan, already a close ally of the United States, has in recent years expanded its military ties with other Indo-Pacific nations as well as with Britain, Europe and NATO amid growing security threat from China and North Korea.

Japan issued a new national security strategy in December stating its determination to build up its military and deploy long-range missiles to preempt enemy attacks in a major break from its post-World War II principle that limited itself to self-defense. Japan also hopes to further ease restrictions on arms export to strengthen the country's feeble defense industry.

While in South Korea on Monday, Stoltenberg called for South Korea to provide direct military support to Ukraine to help Kyiv to fight off the prolonged Russian invasion. So far, Seoul has only provided humanitarian aid and other support, citing a long-standing policy of not supplying weapons to countries in conflict.

World

WORLD BRIEFS

France doesn't rule out sending warplanes to Ukraine

THE HAGUE, The Netherlands (AP)—President Emmanuel Macron said Monday that France doesn't exclude sending fighter jets to Ukraine, but laid out multiple conditions before such a significant step might be taken. France has sent Ukraine air-defense systems, rocket launcher units, cannons and other military equipment and has pledged to send armored surveillance and combat vehicles, but has stopped short of sending battle tanks or heavier weaponry. Asked at a news conference in The Hague on Monday if France is considering sending warplanes, Macron said "nothing is excluded" as long as certain conditions are met. Among those conditions: that providing such equipment would not lead to an escalation of tensions or be used "to touch Russian soil," and that it wouldn't "weaken the capacities of the French army," Macron said. He also said Ukraine would have to formally request the planes. He noted that he will meet visiting Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov in Paris on Tuesday.

5 Ukrainian civilians killed as warring sides mull next move

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Fighting remained largely deadlocked Monday in eastern Ukraine where Russian shelling killed five civilians over the past day, according to Ukrainian officials, as the warring sides sized up their needs for renewed military pushes expected in coming weeks. The casualties included a woman who was killed and three others who were wounded by the Russian shelling of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city in the country's northeast, regional Gov. Oleh Syniyehubov said Monday. Russia's troops seized large areas of the northeastern Kharkiv region in the months following its invasion of its neighbor last February. But Ukrainian counteroffensives that began in August snatched back Russian-occupied territory, notably in Kharkiv. Those successes lent weight to Ukraine's arguments that its troops could deliver more stinging defeats to Russia if its Western allies provided more weaponry. Kyiv last week won promises of tanks from the United States and Germany. Poland's Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki on Monday hinted at the prospect of more upcoming pledges, saying that "any activity aimed at strengthening Ukraine's defense powers is under consultation with our NATO partners." Such a move could encounter some familiar political obstacles, however. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, after demurring for weeks over sending Germany's Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, looks set to dig his heels in over providing fighter jets. Germany would not have the key role in aircraft deliveries that it did with the Leopards, which are German-made and require German export approval.

Bomb hits bus transporting police in south Syria, wounding 15

BEIRUT (AP)—A roadside bomb targeting a bus transporting Syrian police in the country's south Monday wounded 15 of the officers, the Interior Ministry said. The ministry said in a terse statement that the officers were returning to the capital Damascus from the southern province of Daraa. The bomb exploded on the north-south highway near the town of Khirbet Ghazaleh. It said seven officers were seriously wounded. Such attacks are not uncommon in Syria, where a nearly 12-year-old conflict has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced half the country's pre-war population of 23 million. In October, a bus bombing killed 18 Syrian soldiers in a Damascus suburb and wounded at least 27 others. Similar attacks over the years have killed and wounded dozens of soldiers in government-held parts of the war-torn country. In March last year, militants attacked a military bus near the historic town of Palmyra in central Syria, killing 13 troops and wounding 18 others. Syrian authorities usually blame members of the Islamic State group who have been active in southern and central Syria, despite their formal defeat in Syria in 2019. The leader of IS, Abu al-Hassan al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, was killed in battle with Syrian opposition fighters in Daraa province in mid-October.

Germany pledges $222 million for Brazil environment, Amazon

SAO PAULO (AP)—German development minister Svenja Schulze announced Monday that her government will make 204 million euros ($222 million) available for environmental policies in Brazil. Of this total, $38 million is a donation to the Amazon Fund, Schulze told reporters in capital Brasilia. It is the most important international cooperation effort to preserve the Amazon rainforest, and is mostly funded by Norway. In 2019, former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who considered the Amazon an internal affair, dissolved the steering committee that selects sustainable projects to finance. In reaction, Germany and Norway froze their donations. "With the new government and the team of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and (environment) minister Marina Silva, we have a great chance to protect the forest and to offer a new perspective to the people who live there," Schulze said. Under Bolsonaro, deforestation in Brazil's Amazon reached a 15-year high as he dismantled environmental protection policies in favor of agribusiness expansion. Germany also pledged to provide $87 million in low-interest loans for farmers to restore degraded areas and $34 million for Amazon states to protect the rainforest.

Birthday party shooting in South Africa kills 8, injures 3

JOHANNESBURG (AP)—South African police are investigating a weekend shooting where eight people were killed and three injured after armed men opened fire at a house birthday party in the city of Gqeberha, formerly known as Port Elizabeth. According to police spokeswoman Priscilla Naidu, unknown gunmen entered a residential home in Kwazakhele township and started to randomly shoot people on Sunday afternoon. The owner of the house was among the dead and it is unclear what the motive for the shooting was, according to police. "Preliminary investigation at this stage has revealed that between 17:15 and 17:30, the owner of the house was celebrating his birthday when two unknown gunmen entered the yard in Makanda Street in Kwazakhele and started shooting at the guests," Naidu said. She said seven people died on the scene while the eighth victim succumbed to their injuries at hospital. "These victims were killed by criminals and we will not rest until we find out what happened and who was responsible for these callous and cold-blooded attacks on these unsuspecting victims," Naidu said. Police Minister Bheki Cele and other police officials were on Monday visiting the scene of the incident and talking to local residents.

Good Housekeeping

10 TIPS FOR STARTING FRESH

HANDOUT/TNS
A bathroom is designed with tranquility in mind.

HANDOUT/TNS
A well-organized kitchen enhances functionality.

HANDOUT/TNS
A living space that allows the outdoors in.

HANDOUT/TNS
A family room that the whole family can enjoy.

HANDOUT/TNS
Closet organization is a great pre-move-in project.

By CATHY HOBBS
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

At one point you may decide to take the plunge, clear the slate and start fresh, or perhaps you just want to refresh certain areas of your home.

Regardless of your desire, certain rooms and key target areas may serve as a great place to start. The springboard to success may lie in planning, deciding what stays and what goes, and creating a targeted and focused list of must-haves. Here are some tips to help set you on the proper course.

1. Purge. Begin by donating items you no longer need or want.
2. Make a list. The list should contain items you want to keep and those you want to swap out or replace for refreshed items.
3. Look for ways to repurpose items when possible, as opposed to trashing or tossing.
4. Consider ways to bring the outdoors in to bring a sense of freshness and renewal into a space.
5. Organize. For many, organization is the key to a successful home. Kitchens and bathrooms are great places to implement the ideal of sense of order and organization.
6. Make your home functional and purposeful. Rooms that are multipurpose or family-friendly can increase versatility and usage.
7. Set a budget.
8. Set goals and a timeline.
9. Craft a realistic action plan for implementation.
10. Follow up and follow through. Action items in the form of projects and items not implemented should stay on an active to-do list.

Life & Style

Chicago prosecutor dropping R. Kelly sex-abuse charges

CHICAGO (AP)—A Chicago prosecutor said Monday that she's dropping sex-abuse charges against singer R. Kelly following federal convictions in two courts that should guarantee the disgraced R&B star will be locked up for decades.

Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx announced the decision a day ahead of a hearing related to state charges accusing him of sexually abusing four people, three of whom were minors. She said she would ask a judge to dismiss the indictments Tuesday.

Foxx, who in 2019 had pleaded with women and girls to come forward so she could pursue charges against Kelly, acknowledged that the decision "may be disappointing" to his accusers.

"Mr. Kelly is potentially looking at the possibility of never walking out of prison again for the crimes that he's committed," the prosecutor said, referring to his federal convictions. "While today's cases are no longer being pursued, we believe justice has been served."

Kelly

Since Kelly was indicted in Cook County in 2019, federal juries in Chicago and New York have convicted him of a raft of crimes, including child pornography, enticement, racketeering and sex trafficking related to allegations that he victimized women and girls.

Kelly, born Robert Sylvester Kelly, is serving a 30-year prison sentence in the New York case and awaits sentencing on Feb. 23 in Chicago federal court. He is appealing those convictions. Based on the New York sentence alone, the 56-year-old won't be eligible for release until he is around 80.

Foxx said she reached out to Kelly's lawyer two weeks ago to indicate that charges might be dropped. She also spoke to the women whose allegations were at the heart of the case.

Foxx expressed praise for the "courage it took for them to come forward."

Kelly's attorney, Jennifer Bonjean, said she was "pleased" with the prosecution's decision to drop charges.

"He only has one life to give. So I don't know how many sentences upon sentences would satisfy people," Bonjean said.

Lanita Carter, who said she was sexually assaulted by R. Kelly in February 2003, said she was "extremely disappointed" with the news.

"I have spent nearly 20 years hoping that my abuser would be brought to justice for what he did to me. With today's announcement, all hope of justice for my case is gone," Carter said, adding that she trusted Foxx and her office with her story and has spent four years steeling herself to face Kelly to no avail.

Michael Jackson's nephew to star in the King of Pop biopic

NEW YORK (AP)—Michael Jackson's 26-year-old nephew, Jaafar Jackson, will play the King of Pop in the planned biopic "Michael" to be directed by Antoine Fuqua.

Jackson

Lionsgate announced Jackson's casting Monday for the film being produced by Oscar-winning "Bohemian Rhapsody" producer Graham King. Jackson is the second-youngest son of Jermaine Jackson, Michael's brother. He's put out music of his own; in 2019, he released his debut single, "Got Me Singing." "Michael" will be Jackson's acting debut.

"I met Jaafar over two years ago and was blown away by the way he organically personifies the spirit and personality of Michael," said King in a statement. "It was something so powerful that even after conducting a worldwide search, it was clear that he is the only person to take on this role."

On Instagram, Fuqua shared a black-and-white photograph of Jackson in character. Fuqua added in a statement that Jackson "has a natural ability to emulate Michael and such a great chemistry with the camera."

On Twitter, Jackson said he's "humbled and honored to bring my Uncle Michael's story to life."

"Michael" will be an authorized portrait of the pop star, who died in 2009. The film, scripted by "Gladiator" and "The Aviator" screenwriter John Logan, is being produced with the cooperation of the singer's estate.

Priscilla Presley disputes trust of late Lisa Marie Presley

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Priscilla Presley has filed legal documents disputing who oversees the estate of her late daughter Lisa Marie Presley.

The filing in Los Angeles Superior Court last week disputes the validity of a 2016 amendment to Lisa Marie Presley's living trust that removed Priscilla Presley and a former business manager as trustees and replaced them with Lisa Marie Presley's two oldest children, Riley Keough and Benjamin Keough, if she died or became incapacitated. Benjamin Keough died in 2020.

A living trust is a form of estate planning that allows a person to control their assets while alive, but have them distributed if they die. It serves the function of a will if a separate will is not filed, as appears to be the case with Lisa Marie Presley.

Lisa Marie Presley, a singer and the only child of Elvis Presley, died at a California hospital at age 54 on Jan. 12 after paramedics answered a 911 call reporting a woman in cardiac arrest. The Los Angeles County coroner is investigating, and has not yet given a cause of death. She was laid to rest at her family home, Graceland, on Jan. 22.

Priscilla Presley's court filing says there are several issues that bring the living trust amendment's authenticity into doubt.

The filing says they include a failure to notify Priscilla Presley of the change as required, a misspelling of Priscilla Presley's name in a document supposedly signed by her daughter, an atypical signature from Lisa Marie Presley, and a lack of a witness or notarization. It asks a judge to declare the amendment invalid.

The filing says that the business manager, Barry Siegel, intended to resign, which according to the prior terms of the trust would leave Priscilla Presley, 77, and Riley Keough, 33, as co-trustees.

Trevor Noah returns as Grammy host with comfort, nervousness

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Trevor Noah feels more comfortable hosting the Grammy Awards for a third-straight year, but the former "The Daily Show" host still has some nervousness about leading the ceremony with big-time acts like Beyoncé, Adele and Harry Styles looking on.

"The nerves come in because you're standing in front of not just some of the best, but some of the biggest performers in the world," said the Emmy winner. Noah expects his diligent preparation to get him through Sunday's show.

"Nerves are part of what I do," the comedian said.

Noah

Noah returns for his third hosting stint at the Grammys, which airs live from Crypto.com Arena on Sunday on CBS and Paramount+. The ceremony returns to Los Angeles after relocating to Las Vegas for the first-time ever because of rising COVID-19 cases and omicron variant.

"I was relieved Trevor came back because it makes my job more enjoyable and easier," said Ben Winston, the show's executive producer. He called Noah an "absolute pro" who he said can pivot gracefully at any moment on a night celebrating music's best.

"He reassures me on a stressful night when a set hasn't been built in time and I say to his ear 'Sorry about that. I need you to go an extra 90 seconds because Lady Gaga's orchestra isn't in.' He'll just naturally flow, make a joke, get up and sit at somebody's table and chat with them," Winston said. "That's a very difficult task which very few people could do—and definitely can't do with his comedy and charm that Trevor has."

Teenager sports skivvies in front of strangers

DEAR ABBY: I don't know what to do about my 18-year-old niece. She walks around the house in her underwear. She's been doing it for the last two or three years. It wouldn't matter, I suppose, if it were just in front of immediate family living there, but she also does it in front of workmen, the cleaning women, answering the door, going out to get the mail, etc. I'm really disgusted. I spoke to my brother (her father) briefly about it. His response was, "She lives here." Is there anything I can do or say to get her to keep herself a little better covered?

MODEST IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEAR MODEST: Yes, there is. If her family doesn't object to her walking around the house in her underwear, that's their prerogative. But "someone" should remind your niece that doing it in front of workmen, household staff and the mail carrier is DISRESPECTFUL TO THEM. How their neighbors feel about it is anyone's guess, but if she's built like Jennifer Lopez or one of the Kardashians, they may be enjoying the view.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: My friend is always sending me pics of food and beverages he thinks look appetizing. The problem is, the cut of steak he usually eats is cheap and unhealthy-looking. I try to tell him that better-quality meat often has less fat and cholesterol, but he tunes me out. He drinks a lot of wine, too, and I don't think that's good either. I'm trying to help him because I am concerned about his health. He is 56 and has gained a lot of weight. How can I keep him from a cardiovascular emergency?

HEALTHIER EATER

DEAR HEALTHIER: Your friend is an adult. You can't "keep him" from doing anything. Because he isn't open to your helpful suggestions and the photos make you upset, quit looking at them. Accept that when he makes the decision to change his eating and drinking habits, the motivation has to come from within (or from his doctor). You may be able to lead by example and convince him to exercise with you. If you do, be sure to start SLOWLY.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: I live in a very small town where everybody knows everything. I own my home and attend a church with a small congregation. When a food pantry opened, I reluctantly began going in to supplement my food budget. The volunteers are all locals, and I know many of them. One woman, who also attends my church, volunteers there as well. This woman has adopted a smirk and a hard stare in my direction when she sees me now. While I work hard at not caring about what people think, this is a tough one. How should I handle her?

DEAR ABBY
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

SHAMED IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR SHAMED: Handle it by discussing it with whoever has organized and manages that food bank. Also mention it to your pastor. If the church member is behaving as you say she is, she should be told to stop embarrassing you, because it is unchristian and uncalled-for.

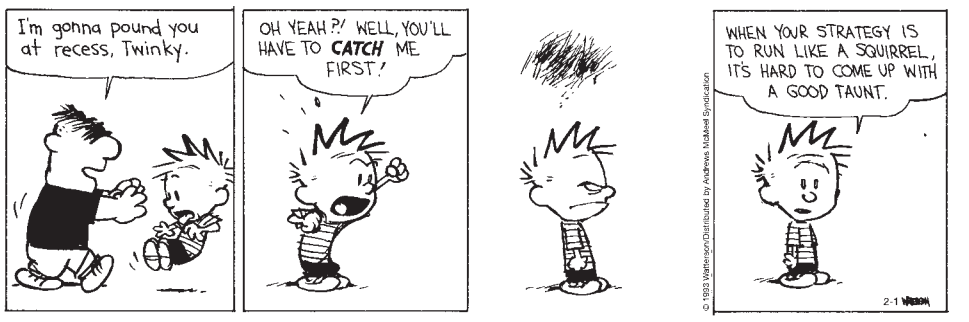
■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


I'm gonna pound you at recess, Twinky.
OH YEAH?! WELL, YOU'LL HAVE TO CATCH ME FIRST!
WHEN YOUR STRATEGY IS TO RUN LIKE A SQUIRREL, IT'S HARD TO COME UP WITH A GOOD TAUNT.
© 1993 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication
2-1

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

GARFIELD...
PIZZA IS NOT A HEALTHY BREAKFAST
MUNCH MUNCH MUNCH
IT IS WHEN THE OTHER CHOICES ARE FRENCH FRIES OR FROSTING
JIM DAVIS 2-1
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Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WHY ARE YOU SO TIRED LATELY?
I DON'T KNOW!
I MUST NOT BE SLEEPING RIGHT.
YESTERDAY I NODDED OFF WHILE I WAS SHAVING.
THAT SOUNDS DANGEROUS.
RIGHT? I DREAMT MY RAZOR WAS A TWIX BAR!
©2023 Andrews McMeel
www.gocomics.com
2-1

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

HOW'D YOUR GROOMING APPOINTMENT GO TODAY?
LOUSY!
IT REALLY HURT WHEN THEY CLIPPED MY NAILS!
So I'm WRITING A NASTY YELP REVIEW.
©2023 Glenn McCoy/Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication www.gocomics.com
2-1

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Cruise of "Top Gun"
4 Sail support
8 Swedish car
12 Alias abbr.
13 Killer whale
14 Gymnast Korbut
15 Hosp. scan
16 Body lotion
18 Pago Pago's place
20 Prattle
21 Grime
24 Actress Rosie
28 Miracle drug, maybe
32 Garr of "Tootsie"
33 Opposite of "post-"
34 Appears
36 Cacophony
37 On in years
39 "You Send Me" singer
41 Mini-plateaus
43 New Mexico resort
44 Abrupt turn
46 Hunk of cheese
50 Waterway in Egypt
55 Scepter
56 Russian river
57 Billy of "Titanic"
58 Miner's find
59 Take the bait
60 Starting lineup?
61 Corral

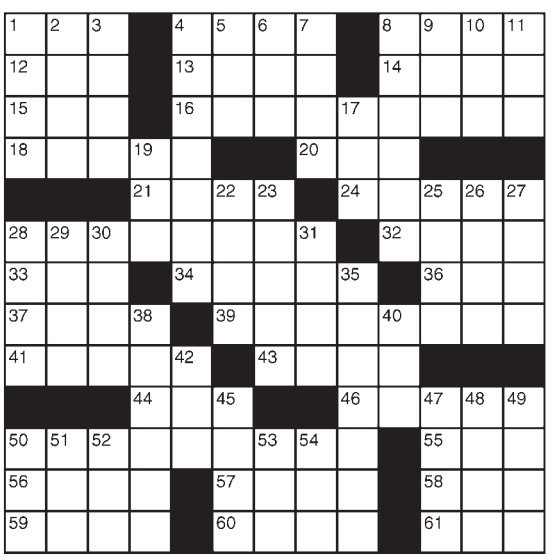
DOWN

1 Aberdeen hats
2 Gumbo need
3 Hurt severely
4 Inlaid tile designs
5 Noah's boat
6 High-school subj.
7 Tart flavor
8 Fruity frozen dessert
9 Pub pint
10 Khan title
11 "Kapow!"
17 Upper limit
19 Poem of praise
22 Regrets
23 Pick up the tab
25 Decorate anew
26 Composer Satie
27 Fan publication
28 Pesky email
29 Desire
30 Roger of "Cheers"
31 Austen novel
35 Grimaced
38 Stupefy
40 Sugary suffix
42 Pouch
45 Mideast strip
47 Let fall
48 Clinton's vice president
49 Genesis garden
50 U-boat, for one
51 Swiss canton
52 Dig in
53 Collar
54 Mandela's org.

Solution time: 23 mins.

T	A	D	A		S	E	R	F		N	O	B
I	N	O	N		T	E	A	L		A	G	O
N	I	C	K	F	A	L	D	O		I	R	A
			L	A	B	S		R	I	L	E	S
T	E	N	E	T			T	I	F	F		
A	X	E	S		C	L	A	S	S	I	C	S
C	P	A		S	H	O	R	T		L	A	O
H	O	T	S	A	U	C	E		B	E	L	L
		F	A	R	M			A	I	S	L	E
C	A	R	L	A		S	I	L	L			
A	M	E		N	E	W	S	F	L	A	S	H
S	I	A		A	M	A	L		E	N	T	O
A	S	K		C	U	T	E		D	A	D	E

Yesterday's answer 2-1



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Harry Styles, 29; Ronda Rousey, 36; Big Boi, 48; Michael C. Hall, 52.

Happy Birthday: Turn your dream into a reality this year. An imaginative mind can determine how to use skills, experience and knowledge to improve your life. Focusing on financial matters will deter you from overspending. A position that offers diversity will take you in an exciting direction. Don't get into a power struggle. Know what you can do and move full steam ahead. Your numbers are 6, 17, 23, 28, 30, 36, 43.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Don't let a power struggle deter you from forging ahead. Stand tall, do your thing and leave nothing to chance. Precision, detail and confidence will be your passage to success. Put thought and energy into making your money work for you. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Don't jump too quickly. Assess situations and masterfully make your way forward. Call the shots instead of being at someone else's beck and call. It's time to break away, let your light shine and show everyone what you can achieve. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Timing is critical when dealing with people who want to stand in your way. Get ready to dodge negativity and outsmart anyone who interferes with your plan. Don't let nervous energy be your downfall. Keep your eye on the target. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Try something new. Use your skills to outshine the competition. Don't be afraid to be different or embrace change. How you move forward will determine how well you do and the types of opportunities you receive. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Wipe that serious look off your face. You can have whatever you want if you use your charm to entice others into joining your plans. You'll gain the respect and backup required to get things done. Bring about change without going over budget. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* If you hesitate, you'll miss an opportunity. Timing is crucial; seize the moment and reach your next goal. It's time to expand your mind, pastimes and connections. Attend networking or social events and work the room. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Choose your words wisely to avoid being left out. What you do, not say, will help you stand out and give you the means to take over. Put your energy where it counts. Contain emotions and avoid repercussions. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Embrace whatever comes your way. Take on responsibilities that raise your confidence and put you back on top. Refuse to let anyone put you down or take over. Be a leader and do for others, and you will feel good about yourself. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Don't follow someone when you should be doing your own thing. Put your energy where it counts, protect meaningful partnerships and make your domestic scene a place you want to kick back and relax with loved ones. Build a loving environment. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Keep your dialogue simple, to the point and very convincing; you'll get the following you want. A change at home will be the pick-me-up you need to appreciate what you have. An energetic activity will lead to a healthy lifestyle. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Pay attention to details, update documents and read the fine print when dealing with official or sensitive issues. Stay on track, let people come to you and do your research. Confidence will ward off meddlers. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Certain suggestions will make you question your next move. Call on those you trust to offer sage advice. A quick change of plans will deter someone from getting in your way. Keep your thoughts and plans to yourself and avoid opposition. ✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are an achiever, competitor and fighter. You are transparent and demanding.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		7		8				
8	9	6	1		3			5
1			9		7	6	4	
						2	3	7
3	1		2				6	
		8			4			9
6			4			9		3
9	3			1			8	
7								6

Difficulty: ★★★ 2-1

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's Answer

3	6	7	2	4	9	5	8	1
4	5	1	8	6	3	7	2	9
8	9	2	5	1	7	3	6	4
6	1	9	3	8	2	4	7	5
7	2	3	9	5	4	6	1	8
5	4	8	6	7	1	9	3	2
2	3	4	7	9	8	1	5	6
1	7	5	4	2	6	8	9	3
9	8	6	1	3	5	2	4	7

Difficulty Level ★★ 1/31

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

PLAYING THE CLARINET Solution: 6 letters

E	N	T	H	U	M	B	O	T	A	R	B	I	V	D
R	N	A	E	C	A	P	R	T	I	T	T	O	N	Y
U	R	O	E	H	T	E	E	T	E	R	L	U	M	N
T	O	E	T	L	C	I	E	M	E	U	O	S	R	A
X	H	L	S	N	C	L	P	B	M	S	P	M	E	M
E	O	A	O	Q	B	O	L	E	E	E	T	H	S	I
T	L	C	N	M	U	E	N	R	E	A	I	T	O	C
L	E	S	E	D	C	E	U	D	E	M	N	Y	P	S
I	S	S	Y	L	S	H	A	B	U	V	A	H	M	Y
G	S	G	E	E	C	O	R	K	A	C	A	R	O	M
A	N	F	T	U	K	S	L	L	I	R	T	T	C	P
T	W	O	O	D	W	I	N	D	E	E	R	O	C	H
U	N	B	S	E	R	I	O	T	R	E	P	E	R	O
R	M	E	S	A	C	L	A	S	S	I	C	A	L	N
E	C	E	I	P	H	T	U	O	M	E	L	O	D	Y

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Assemble, Barrel, Beat, Case, Classical, Clean, Composer, Concert, Conductor, Cork, Dynamics, Embouchure, Hands, Holes, Horn, Keys, Ligature, March, Melody, Mouthpiece, Notes, Octave, Pace, Pitch, Reed, Repertoire, Rhythm, Scale, Song, Sound, Speed, Squeak, Symphony, Teeth, Tempo, Texture, Thumb, Tone, Treble Clef, Trills, Vibrato, Volume, Woodwind

Yesterday's Answer: Lightning

The NEW **Volume 70** can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

Irving leads Nets past Lakers 121-104 as James, Davis sit

NEW YORK (AP)—Kyrie Irving had 26 points, seven rebounds and six assists to lead the Brooklyn Nets to a 121-104 victory Monday night over the Los Angeles Lakers, who played without LeBron James and Anthony Davis.

Patty Mills and Cam Thomas added 21 points apiece for the Nets, who won their second straight and are 4-6 since Kevin Durant sprained a ligament in his right knee.

Lakers coach Darvin Ham said James was experiencing "really significant soreness" in his left foot and would be evaluated Tuesday to see if he could play at the New York Knicks that night.

It was a planned day off for Davis so he didn't play both ends of a back-to-back after returning last week from a 20-game absence due to a right foot injury,

Thomas Bryant had 18 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, while Russell Westbrook finished with 17 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds.

AP

Brooklyn Nets guard Kyrie Irving (11) drives past Los Angeles Lakers forward Rui Hachimura (28) during the first half of an NBA basketball game Monday, Jan. 30, 2023, in New York.

WARRIORS 128, THUNDER 120

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP)—Stephen Curry had 38 points, 12 assists and eight rebounds, and Golden State defeated Oklahoma City for its third straight win.

Curry made 8 of 14 3-pointers and 12 of 20 shots overall. Klay Thompson added 28 points and hit six 3s for the Warriors.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 21 of his 31 points in the second half for the Thunder. Josh Giddey had 21 points and Jalen Williams added 19 for Oklahoma City, which missed out on a chance to even its season record.

MAGIC 119, 76ERS 109

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Paolo Banchero had 29 points and 10 rebounds as Orlando stormed back from a 21-point first-quarter deficit to beat Philadelphia.

Mo Wagner scored 22 points and younger brother Franz Wagner added 19 for the Magic, who stopped a three-game skid and ended the Sixers' seven-game winning streak.

Joel Embiid had 30 points and 11 rebounds for Philadelphia, his 27th game this season scoring 30 or more and his ninth in the past 10.

MAVERICKS 111, PISTONS 105

DALLAS (AP)—Luka Doncic had 53 points in his return to the lineup and Spencer Dinwiddie scored 10 of his 12 in the fourth quarter as Dallas rallied past Detroit.

Four of Doncic's five career 50-point games have come this season. He scored a career-best 60 against the New York Knicks in a game that went to overtime on Dec. 27.

Doncic had 24 points in the first quarter and 18 in the third. Second in the NBA going in with an average of 33 points per game, he returned after spraining his left ankle early in last Thursday's game at Phoenix and then missing Saturday's game at Utah.

Bojan Bogdanovic had 29 points for the Pistons, who have lost six of seven.

TRAIL BLAZERS 129, HAWKS 125

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Damian Lillard scored 42 points, Anfernee Simons hit a tiebreaking 3 with 34 seconds left and Portland held off Atlanta.

Dejounte Murray had 40 points, eight rebounds and six assists for the Hawks, who played without star point guard Trae Young (ankle).

Lillard added six assists in his fifth 40-point game this month. Jerami Grant had 22 points and Simons finished with 21, including his clutch 3 that gave the Trail Blazers a 124-121 lead.

Bogdan Bogdanovic scored 23 for Atlanta off the bench.

KINGS 118, TIMBERWOLVES 111, OT

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—De'Aaron Fox had 32 points and Trey Lyles scored eight of his 11 in overtime as Sacramento outlasted Minnesota.

Domantas Sabonis had 17 points and 13 rebounds before fouling out for the Kings, and Keegan Murray added 13 points and 13 rebounds.

Lyles took over for Sabonis at center and started the extra period with a 3-pointer. He dunked on Rudy Gobert for a three-point play and got wide open for another slam with 37.8 seconds left in overtime for a five-point lead to give the Kings a split of this two-game set after a 117-110 loss Saturday night.

Anthony Edwards had 33 points and eight rebounds for the Timberwolves, hitting the 30-point mark for the fifth time in the last six games. Gobert added 19 points and 14 rebounds.

WIZARDS 127, SPURS 106

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Deni Avdija scored a career-high 25 points, Bradley Beal added 21 and Washington ended a 22-game losing streak in San Antonio.

Kristaps Porzingis had 17 points and nine rebounds after a fast start for the Wizards, who hadn't beaten the Spurs on the road since Dec. 11, 1999. Washington has won six straight for its longest winning streak since a six-game run in 2015.

Keldon Johnson had 26 points for the Spurs, who have lost six in a row to fall to 2-13 this month.

SUNS 114, RAPTORS 106

PHOENIX (AP)—Mikal Bridges scored 29 points, Deandre Ayton added 22 points and 13 rebounds, and Phoenix pulled away late to beat Toronto.

The Suns won for the sixth time in seven games despite missing All-Star guard Devin Booker for the entire stretch.

Chris Paul hit a crucial 3-pointer to push the Suns ahead 106-102 with 1:30 left. Ayton added a tip-in with 51.4 seconds remaining to extend the advantage to 108-102.

Paul finished with 19 points and nine assists.

Fred VanVleet had 24 points and nine assists for the Raptors.

Referees' union says James was fouled on controversial play

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

The National Basketball Referees Association said Sunday that LeBron James was fouled on the last play of regulation in the Los Angeles Lakers' game against the Boston Celtics.

The NBA office also confirmed for the second time that a foul should have been called.

"Like everyone else, referees make mistakes," the union wrote in its tweet. "We made one at the end of last night's game and that is gut-wrenching for us. This play will weigh heavily and cause sleepless nights as we strive to be the best referees we can be."

James got the ball about 35 feet from the basket, with 4.1 seconds remaining in what was a tied game at Boston on Saturday night. He split two defenders as he got into the lane, then went airborne and got past Jayson Tatum as well.

James laid the ball up with his left hand, Tatum clearly made contact with James' shooting arm, no foul was called and the game went to overtime. Had a foul been called, James would have gone to the free-throw line with an opportunity to put the Lakers ahead with 1.8 seconds remaining.

The Celtics wound up winning the game in overtime, 125-121.

"We got cheated tonight, honestly. ... It's unacceptable," Lakers forward Anthony Davis said after the game.

The NBA acknowledged shortly after the game that a foul should have been called —"There was contact. At the time, during the game, we did not see a foul. The crew missed the play," crew chief Eric Lewis told a pool reporter —and reaffirmed that Sunday in the report detailing calls made and missed in the final two minutes of regulation and overtime.

The Lakers entered Sunday 13th in the Western Conference at 23-27, only two games back of the final play-in spot and four games back of the fourth-place Los Angeles Clippers. But the Lakers have also spent virtually the entire season on the outside of the playoff picture.

"We don't have room for error," James said after Saturday's game. "And it's one of the best games we played all year. For it to fall on somebody else's judgment, or non-judgment, it's just ridiculous. It's ridiculous."

Neither James nor Davis will play in the Lakers' next game on Monday at Brooklyn, the team said. Injuries are the reason; James has left ankle soreness and Davis continues to deal with a right foot stress injury.

James reacted with no shortage of animation after the missed call on the Tatum play, immediately pointing to his arm and eventually slumping to the court, resting on his knees and elbows as he tried to come to grips with no foul being called.

Lakers guard Patrick Beverley brought a camera onto the court during the ensuing stoppage to show Lewis an image of the contact; Beverley got a technical foul, and the Celtics wound up starting the overtime with a 106-105 lead because of the resulting free throw.

It marked at least the fourth time in recent weeks that the Lakers felt a late-game call went against them in what became a loss.

"I don't see it happening to nobody else," James said. "It's just weird."

Added Lakers coach Darvin Ham: "As much as you try not to put it on officiating, it's becoming increasingly difficult."

Joe Mazzulla, Celtics staff will coach at NBA All-Star Game

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP Basketball Writer

Joe Mazzulla started the season as an assistant coach. He then became interim head coach of the Boston Celtics, in a most unexpected way.

And now, the NBA's youngest head coach is headed to the All-Star Game.

The 34-year-old Mazzulla and his Celtics staff of assistants will coach Team Giannis—the team that will be captained by Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo—in the Feb. 19 game at Salt Lake City. They clinched that chance Monday night when Philadelphia lost to Orlando, an outcome that ensured Boston would have the leading record in the Eastern Conference at the close of play on Sunday.

Sunday is the cutoff for the league to determine All-Star coaches; the teams with the best records to that point get the right to send their coaching staffs to the game, provided they hadn't had the job the year before. Denver's Michael Malone is currently the front-runner to coach Team LeBron, the squad that will be captained by the Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James.

"It definitely hasn't been easy the whole time," Mazzulla said last week when asked about the challenges of the season to this point. "But it's been fun. It's been rewarding."

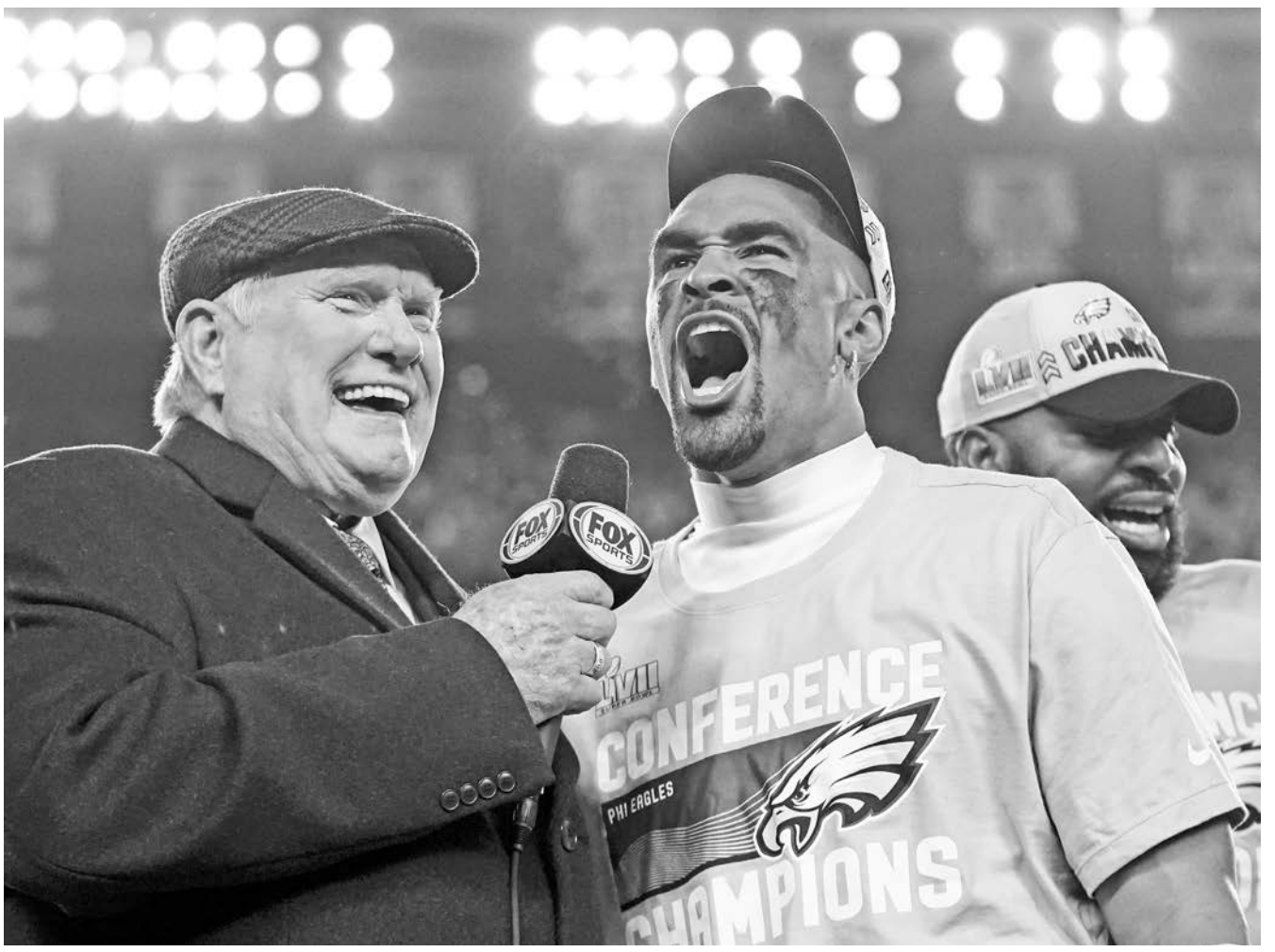
Mazzulla has the Celtics, the reigning Eastern Conference champions, off to an NBA-best record of 36-15 so far this season.

They haven't missed a beat despite going through a tumultuous beginning of the year once Boston suspended coach Ime Udoka for the season; an investigation by an external law firm found Udoka committed multiple violations of team policies for what sources told The Associated Press involved an inappropriate relationship with a woman in the organization.

"You've just got to move on," Celtics All-Star forward Jayson Tatum said. "Nobody's going to feel bad for us. We've got games to play, we've got work to do. I'd be lying if I said it wasn't tough in the beginning with the injuries and obviously getting a new coach two days before the season started. But I think we did a great job of managing that and it's showing."

Mazzulla is believed to be the first interim coach in NBA history to have the All-Star coaching opportunity. He will coach the team that Antetokounmpo drafts shortly before the game; the captains, in a change this season, won't pick their teams until game night in Salt Lake City.

Analysis: Mahomes, Hurts set for historic Super Bowl matchup



AP

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts, center, reacts while speaking toTerry Bradshaw, left, after the NFC Championship NFL football game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the San Francisco 49ers on Sunday, Jan. 29, 2023, in Philadelphia.

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Black quarterbacks have come a long way in the NFL since Fritz Pollard became the first to play in the league in 1923 and Doug Williams was the first to start and win a Super Bowl following the 1987 season.

Now, Patrick Mahomes and Jalen Hurts will be the first Black QBs to face off in a Super Bowl.

It's fitting that a season which began with 11 Black QBs starting in Week 1 will end with a historic matchup.

Mahomes can become the first two-time winner if he leads the Kansas City Chiefs to victory over the Philadelphia Eagles on Feb. 12. Hurts aims to become the fourth Black QB to win the Super Bowl, joining Williams, Mahomes and Russell Wilson.

Steve McNair, Colin Kaepernick, Cam Newton and Wilson also started in the Super Bowl and lost.

Michael Vick was the first Black QB selected No. 1 overall in the draft in 2001. McNair became the first Black QB to win MVP in 2003. Mahomes and Lamar Jackson won it back-to-back years.

They all had to overcome stereotypes to get to this point.

Jackson said a scout from the Los Angeles Chargers asked him to run routes at the NFL combine in 2018. The Baltimore Ravens ended up selecting him with the 32nd pick in the first round and he was MVP in his second season.

Donovan McNabb, a six-time Pro Bowl QB who started five NFC championship games for the Eagles, was told by some college scouts that he had to play running back or wide receiver. He wouldn't switch positions, went to Syracuse to play quarterback and was drafted No. 2 overall in 1999 by Philadelphia.

Hurts began his NFL career in 2020 as an all-purpose QB after the Eagles took him in the second round. Playing behind Carson Wentz, Hurts had 12 rushing attempts, one catch and threw just three passes in his first nine games before taking over as Philadelphia's QB.

He clearly has not forgotten that the decision to draft him in the second round of the 2020 draft was widely criticized by reporters and fans.

"My first year here, (people) probably didn't even want to draft me here," Hurts said Sunday. "It was probably one of those things. But it always handles itself."

Neither Hurts nor Mahomes celebrated their conference championship wins too much. The main goal remains ahead. They each want one more win.

Hurts puffed a victory cigar after the Eagles routed the San Francisco 49ers 31-7 but he showed little emotion, per usual, in his postgame news conference.

"I don't really know how to feel to be honest. You work really hard to put yourself in this position and I'm forever grateful," Hurts said. "Only God knows the things that each individual on this team has been able to overcome for us to come together as a team and do something special as a group. That's what means the most. I always want to go out there and give my best regardless of what's going on because I don't want to let down the guy next to me. That makes us all go harder."

Hurts, a finalist along with Mahomes for AP NFL MVP and Offensive Player of the Year, missed two games late in the season with a shoulder injury. The Eagles haven't had to lean on him in two lopsided playoff wins. He has only 275 yards passing and two TDs along with 73 yards rushing and two scores.

"I know I've been through a lot personally, but I don't want to steer away from the direction of how good this team has been at playing together, being together, and challenging one another," Hurts said. "When we experience some painful times and some tough times, we always found a way to overcome. You want to be going into a situation like this, and we have a chance to go out there and win it all, so we want to prepare to go do that."

Mahomes battled through an ankle injury to help the Chiefs beat the Cincinnati Bengals 23-20 to advance to their third Super Bowl appearance in four years.

He had no intention of lighting up a victory cigar after a hard-fought win.

"I don't think we have any cigars, but we'll be ready to go at the Super Bowl," Mahomes said, poking fun at Joe Burrow's penchant for puffing those after big wins.

Only one QB can win the Super Bowl. Whether it's Hurts or Mahomes, it's another victory for the Black QBs who were overlooked throughout the years.

Source: Royals agree with RHP Greinke on deal for 2023

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—The Royals and Zach Greinke have agreed to a contract for the coming season, a person familiar with the deal told The Associated Press on Monday, making it nine seasons over two stints in Kansas City for the six-time All-Star pitcher.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the 39-year-old Greinke still needed to pass a physical.

The financial terms of the deal, which was first reported by Kansas City sports radio host Bob Fescoe, were not immediately available. Greinke was paid $13 million last season by the Royals, where he spent the first seven season before returning last year and going 3-9 with a 3.68 ERA and striking out 73 over 137 innings for the rebuilding club.

Greinke did spend two stints on the injured list but allowed two runs or fewer in 17 of his 26 starts last season.

Perhaps most importantly, Greinke provided veteran leadership to one of baseball's younger rotations. Brady Singer, at just 26, flourished into the staff ace, while fellow 20-somethings Daniel Lynch and Kris Bubic also made progress.

Greinke, who will turn 40 in October, began his career in Kansas City as a mercurial first-round pick in the 2002 amateur draft. He nearly walked away from the game before making it to the big leagues two years later, beginning a 20-year career that included stints with the Brewers, Angels, Dodgers, Diamondbacks and Astros.

The 2009 Cy Young winner is first among active pitchers with 514 career starts and 3,247 innings pitched. Greinke is second to Justin Verlander with 223 wins, third in strikeouts (2,882) and has six Gold Gloves and two Silver Slugger awards.

The Royals had been quiet much of the offseason but have been busy in the weeks leading up to spring training.

Just recently, they sent starting outfielder Michael A. Taylor to the Twins and injury-prone shortstop Adalberto Mondesi to the Red Sox, netting three pitching prospects in the deals. They also signed reliever Aroldis Chapman to a $3.75 million deal for 2023 in the hopes the seven-time All-Star can bounce back from a disappointing season with the Yankees.

Earlier in the offseason, the Royals signed pitchers Ryan Yarbrough and Jordan Lyles. Both of them are candidates for the starting rotation, though Yarbrough's value most likely will be found in the bullpen.

Novak Djokovic back at top of ATP rankings; Sabalenka No. 2 in WTA

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Novak Djokovic's Australian Open championship returned him to a rather familiar spot on Monday: No. 1 in the ATP rankings.

His four-place rise from No. 5 to replace Carlos Alcaraz at No. 1 is the largest jump to the top spot in the 50-year history of the computerized rankings for men's tennis.

"You never know how much more time you have left, so, of course, I nurture and celebrate these moments of becoming No. 1 again and Grand Slam champion," the 35-year-old Djokovic said after beating Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-3, 7-6 (4), 7-6 (5) in the final at Melbourne Park on Sunday night, "even more than I have, maybe ever in my career. I don't take it for granted."

Aryna Sabalenka's first major title moved her up from No. 5 to a career-best-equaling No. 2 in the WTA rankings, behind only three-time major champion Iga Swiatek.

Ons Jabeur, twice a finalist at Slams in 2022, went from No. 2 to No. 3, followed by No. 4 Jessica Pegula, No. 5 Caroline Garcia and No. 6 Coco Gauff.

The player Sabalenka beat in Saturday's Australian Open final, Elena Rybakina, makes her top 10 debut at No. 10, up from No. 25.

This marks Djokovic's 374th week leading the ATP, adding to his record. He earned a 10th title at the Australian Open and tied Rafael Nadal with 22 Grand Slam trophies.

Alcaraz slid to No. 2. He had become the youngest man to be No. 1 when he took over at age 19 after winning the U.S. Open last September. Alcaraz missed the Australian Open because of a leg injury.

Nadal, who hurt his left hip flexor during a second-round loss to Mackenzie McDonald of the United States, dropped from No. 2 to No. 6.

Tsitsipas went from No. 4 to No. 3 because of his run in Melbourne; he would have been No. 1 for the first time if he had managed to win the title. Casper Ruud, a two-time Grand Slam runner-up who lost in the second round to Jenson Brooksby of the United States, went from No. 3 to No. 4. Andrey Rublev is No. 5 after getting to the quarterfinals.

Cracking the top 20 for the first time is Tommy Paul, a 25-year-old American who reached his first Grand Slam semifinal before exiting against Djokovic. Paul's showing in Melbourne lifted him 16 spots from No. 35 to No. 19.

He is one of 10 U.S. men in the top 50, something that last happened in 1995.

NMA to host four-day 'Talent Identification Camp'

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Orrin Pharmin is seen in the long jump event of the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games at the Oleai Sports Complex last June.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Zarinae Sapong is seen in action during the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games at tue Oleai Sports Complex last June.

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Athletics is hosting a four-day "TalentIdentification Camp" every Saturday in February from 7am to 9am, starting this Saturday, Feb. 4 and will continue on Feb. 11, Feb. 18, and Feb. 25 at the Oleai Sports Complex.

This Saturday's event is the mid/long distance race; Feb. 11th's event is sprints/hurdles; Feb. 18th's event is discus/javelin/hammer/shotput throws; and Feb. 25th's event is long/high/triple jumps.

The camp is in anticipation of the upcoming June 2023 4th Oceania Cup and Masters Athletics Championships on Saipan, the July 2023 10th Micronesian Games in the Marshall Islands, and the November 2023 Pacific Mini Games in the Solomon Islands.

The camp will be conducted by NMA development officer and coach, Elias Rangamar, NMI national athletics team coach Dr. Ron Snyder, along with some members of the NMA national team.

Members of the camp may potentially be selected to join the national program and other camps as NMA prepares for the 2023 season.

The camp costs $5 and includes four sessions. The camp is open to persons ages 14 and up. Interested individuals may register on-line at https://raceroster.com/events/2023/71753/nma-talent-id-camp-2023

NMA developmental officer and coach Elias Rangamar said that "Talent ID camps are designed to identify potential athletes interested in making age group and national programs. They get to be evaluated, identified, selected, then given the opportunity to develop their potential in the sport of athletics whilst competing at a high level."

NMI national athletics team coach Dr. Ron Snyder added "NMA is always looking for new talent to support the many different events that we must field in Athletics. In track and field alone we have 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1,500m, 3,000m, 5,000m, 10,000m, hurdles, steeplechase, discus, javelin, hammer throw, shot put, long jump, high jump, triple jump, and a range of relays. We also have Cross Country and Road Racing events."

"Athletics, in short, has the greatest range of fitness types," he added.

The end goal of this camp, Synder said is "We hope that we can identify future talent to grow our sports participation. Beyond that, we also believe it is important to serve the community in order to provide healthy opportunities and increase the cardiovascular, strength and flexibility of the people of the CNMI."

For questions, email NMA secretary general Robin Sapong at rsapong@gmail.com or text (670) 788 0929.

DOLPHINS

From Page 20

ond game day and after beating Grace Christian Academy and Kagman High School on their first game day last Jan. 21, the Dolphins lead Bracket 2 with an overall score of 55.

In second place is SSHS 1 with 39 points, ACS 2 is third place with 30 points, KHS is next with 26 points, and Grace Christian Academy and SIS are both at the bottom with 21 points.

With this, both of the Dolphins teams lead their respective brackets, as Dolphins 1 leads Bracket I with 56 points.

The schedule for the next round-robin games are on Saturday, Feb. 25.

The Top 2 of Bracket 1 and Bracket 2 round-robin semi-final games are scheduled for Saturday, March 4, while the championship game is scheduled for Saturday, March 11.

LEIGH GASES
Mariel Hembra from Saipan Southern High School is seen during the second day of round-robin games in the co-ed high school Public School System/TakeCare Badminton Interscholastic League held at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last Saturday.

CUKI

From Page 20

competitively," he said, while thanking his many sponsors.

"Cycles Plus Guam for all the support and for hooking me up with a great bike for 2023! Kawasaki Team all the way! And of course I would like to thank Marianas Racing Association, the MRA board, who works tirelessly to ensure a smooth season and I also want to thank the Saipan Mayor's Office, Department of Public Works, Marianas Visitors Authority, and Monster Energy for the upkeep of Cowtown and sponsoring the season," he said.

In the Veterans Class, Dave Celis ruled the roost with also a perfect score of 50 points. He was followed by Cuki Alvarez and Melvin Cepeda with 44 points and 40 points, respectively.

Charles Cepeda (36 points), Ray Yumul (32 points), Ponce Rasa (30 points), and Bob Ferrer (28 points) also took part in the Veterans Class.

Kassidy Camacho, meanwhile, topped the Mini ATV Class with 50 points. The only other competitor was Anella Igitol who wound up with 47 points.

The results of the rest of the classes in the January edition of the 2023 Monster Energy Point Series Race will be published in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune.*

TISHA FERRER
Justis "Cuki" Alvarez in action the during the Expert Class of the 2023 Monster Energy Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.

GANACIAS

From Page 20

do feel relieved that I now have a chance to vie for our 2023 Ace of Aces," he told *Saipan Tribune.*

Ganacias was also fairly happy with his golf game that particular Saturday.

"My putting was working well that day which encouraged me to play well from tee to green. The weather that day was dry and cool, which made the game ideal for good scoring," he added.

Ganacias thanked his wife and family for supporting his love for the game of golf.

"I am also thankful to the Fil-Taga founders, Mike, Jess, and Tony for keeping our club operating for many years now and to Ruben for doing most of the leg work. To this date, I feel a close knit of camaraderie among the officers and members of the Fil-Taga. With these, I dedicate my win to my wife, family, and friends I mentioned above."

Coming in second to Ganacias in the first monthly tournament of 2023 for Fil-Taga was Freddie Cataluna with his net 72 after the 3-handicapper had it going with a 75 gross (40-35).

Third place was a tie between Ruben Avendano and Wil Maui after both players finished with a net 75. The former shot a gross of 94 (47-47), while the latter returned to the clubhouse with a gross of 86 (40-46).

Mike Cruz (net 79), Ed Varias (net 80), and Ronnie Santos (net 81) also took part in the January Ace.

Irving leads Nets past Lakers 121-104 as James, Davis sit

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NMA to host four-day 'Talent Identification Camp'

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Cuki draws 1st blood in Expert Class

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Justis "Cuki" Alvarez started the new year with a bang after topping the Expert Class of the 2023 Monster Energy Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.

The 52-year-old boat captain edged his own son Shane en route to winning the first race of the 2023 season for the Marianas Racing Association.

Cuki won both races with 50 points with Shane coming in second in both heats for 44 points. Dave Celis completed the Top 3 with 38 points.

Alverick Alvarez (38 points), Ellery Cruz (34 points), Patrick Togawa (29 points), Melvin Cepeda (29 points), and Charles Cepeda (13 points) make up the rest of the racers in the Expert Class.

The elder Alvarez said winning the January race is a good sign of things to come.

"It's always good to start off the season with the win. This sets the pace early on for the season. I went a perfect 1-1, so I garnered the most points which gives me a 6-point cushion going into Round 2."

Asked what his edge was in the January race, Cuki pointed to his spanking new bike.

"Well, it never hurts to have a brand new bike! I literally got my brand new 2023 KX250F on Wednesday the week of the race. Broke it in on Saturday and raced it on Sunday. The 2023 models have upgraded suspension and the handling is nice. Not to mention, I went from a 450cc to a 250cc, which is less power, but way easier to handle, so it was actually easier to ride, hence less energy usage on this old man's part. The 'less is more' concept worked great. I was able to get the holeshot out of the gate in both motos (heats) and so I had a clear view being in front and this helped in the dusty conditions."

He dedicated the January win to all the young up-and-coming motocross racers.

"I hope to inspire and show them that even at age 52, you can still race at a high level

See CUKI on Page 19

TISHA FERRER
Justis "Cuki" Alvarez gestures the shaka after ruling the Expert Class of the 2023 Monster Energy Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Race Track.

Ganacias is January Ace of the Month

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Dan Ganacias, seen here in a file photo, topped the Fil-Taga Golfers Association January Ace of the Month Tournament held last Jan. 21 at the Kingfisher Golf Links in Talafofo.

By MARK RABAGO
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REPORTER

Dan Ganacias won the Fil-Taga Golfers Association January Ace of the Month Tournament after carding the lowest net score last Jan. 21 at the Kingfisher Golf Links in Talafofo.

The 61-year-old vice president of Enginering at Radio Com Saipan Inc. fired a net score of 66 to top the tournament, which actually coincided with Round 2 of the club's 2022 Ace of Aces Tournament.

Ganacias shot a gross score of 79 after going 40 in the front nine and 39 at the back, which minus his low 13 handicap, gave him the score to beat for January.

"It feels fantastic to triumph the first Ace of the Month of the year and I

See GANACIAS on Page 19

Dolphins 1 tops Bracket 2 of HS co-ed badminton

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Marianas High School Dolphins 1 remain the top seed in Bracket 2 on the second day of round-robin games after defeating two schools in the co-ed high school Public School System/TakeCare Badminton Interscholastic League held at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium last Saturday.

Saipan International School Geckos 2 fell first in a sweep to the Dolphins 1, 0-15, while Agape Christian School Torchbearers 2 was the next victim as they fell, 1-14.

The Dolphins 1 boys, consisting of Sernantie Jimenez, Brian Lubao, Ian Lubao, Daniell Pablo, and Kyle Salcedo, and girls including Terresa Ahn, Shemariah Hicaro, Angela Maratas, Prapti Mondal, and Abigael Robles, were perfect in all five events against the Geckos—the boys doubles, boys singles, girls singles, girls doubles, and mixed doubles events.

In their game against the Torchbearers 2, they were almost perfect in all events except for the girls doubles for a score of 2-1.

In other results that day, ACS team 2 lost to Kagman High School, 4-11; KHS beat Grace Christian Academy 1, 9-6; and Saipan Southern High School beat GCA 1, 13-2.

After their successful sec-

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LEIGH GASES
Roger Hernandez, left, and Nolan Nate from Saipan Southern High School are seen in action last Jan. 21 in the co-ed high school Public School System/TakeCare Badminton Interscholastic League held at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.